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ITS PEOPLE AND RELIGION

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# BURMA

A SHORT STUDY OF ITS PEOPLE AND RELIGION

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# BURMA

A SHORT STUDY OF ITS PEOPLE AND  
RELIGION

BY

THE REV. F. E. TROTMAN, B.A.

*Vicar of Mars, Wilts; formerly Chaplain to the Bishop of Rangoon*

ILLUSTRATED

**The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts**

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## NOTE

IN the present volume the author has provided a study of the people and religion of Burma which will usefully supplement the book entitled "Christian Missions in Burma," written by the Rev. W. C. B. Purser, which was recently issued by the S.P.G. It does not deal directly with the work of Christian Missions, but contains a large amount of helpful information relating to the history and geography of Burma and the Buddhism and other forms of religion that are found amongst the Burmans.

S.P.G. EDITORIAL SECRETARY.



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## CHAPTER I.

### THE LAND OF GOLD.

PTOLEMY the Geographer, writing in Alexandria in the middle of the second century of our era, speaks of the Chryse Regio, the Golden Chersonese. His geography, so far as the East is concerned, is but a list of places, with their supposed latitudes and longitudes, but, until the discoveries of the fifteenth century, it was a standard work. And for us it provides the first mention of Burma in Western literature, for what is Chryse Regio but the classical equivalent for Suvama-Bhumi, the "Golden Land" of the Buddhist tales, the Pali<sup>1</sup> rendering of which, "Sonaparanta," was used in their papers of state by Burmese kings.

Ptolemy used the work of an earlier writer, Marinus of Tyre, and much of the latter's knowledge of the East came first hand from navigators who had sailed the Indian Seas, and brought its wares to that clearing house of East and West, Alexandria. We can imagine them coasting round the great Indian Peninsula, hardly a Peninsula at all in the maps of Ptolemy, past Ceylon, up the Eastern coast of India, to the mouths

<sup>1</sup>A language of the Deccan, which became the sacred language of Buddhism.

of the Kistna and Godaveri, and then across the Bay of Bengal, and up the Gulf of Martaban to the port of Thaton. There at last we have the Land of Gold, for Thaton is but the Môn<sup>1</sup> equivalent for Suvarna-Bhumi. The sea has now receded from Thaton, but 2000 years ago it must have washed the hills to the north and east, and ancient mooring places at Thaton and elsewhere show that the gulf was the centre of a busy seafaring life.

Burma is not one of the gold-producing countries of the world. Yet in every stream the grains can be found, and in the far north, where mountain streams combine to form the great Irrawaddy, an English gold dredging company has been at work during recent years. But it is more to the point that the sands of the Salween are still washed by the Burmese for gold, and the Salween runs out to sea into that Gulf of Martaban to which Ptolemy's navigators came.

But for the European of to-day, if Burma is the "Land of Gold," it is not for the precious metal which it produces, but for its other wealth. The traveller who lands in Rangoon, and goes by water to Bassein, or by rail to Mandalay, passes in the cool weather for 150 miles through a sea of golden rice. Or, as he steams up the Rangoon river in the early morning, out of the mist towers the spire of the Golden Pagoda, and, wherever he goes throughout the land, out of the green forests rise the golden spires which proclaim the devotion of the people to the gentle Buddha.

We do not go seeking gold dust; and we may

<sup>1</sup> One of the peoples and languages of Burma.

come bringing a treasure more precious than the rubies for which Burma is famous; but for those who have lived in Burma, and for whom its gorgeous colours have become a part of their dreams, not even Coolgardie or Klondyke more fittingly deserves the name of the Land of Gold.

British Burma has an area of about 239,000 square miles, four times the size of England and Wales. It is at once the last acquired, the largest and most easterly of the provinces of our Indian Empire.

For an understanding of its geography we may take as a framework either its mountains or its rivers.

From the south-eastern end of the great snow-bound masses of Tibet, run out like two great horns the mountain ranges which hide away from the world the plains of Burma. The western horn begins by dividing Burma from Assam and Eastern Bengal, and runs in a great curve of 700 miles to Cape Negrais. It bears many names in its course, the Patkoi Mountains, Chin Hills, Arakan Yoma, and in the far north climbs in Sarametti to a height of 13,000 feet, and swells to a width of 70 miles, but it tapers away to lofty downs before running into the sea at Negrais. In the Andaman Isles, 160 miles out to sea, think geologists, the ridge rises again. Parallel with it in the north are the broken hills which divide the upper waters of the Irrawaddy from its greatest tributary, the Chindwin, and parallel again with it on the south is the saw-like edge of the Pegu Yoma, 1500 to 3000 feet high, which form the watershed of the Irrawaddy and the Sittang. The eastern horn begins

by dividing Burma from Yunnan, the most south-westerly province of China, and towers to 11,000 to 12,000 feet in its northern latitudes, but again, as on the west, it falls away. To the traveller on the Burma Railway from Pegu to Mandalay, and on the river from Mandalay to Bhamo, it appears as a well-defined ridge 3000 to 6000 feet high, the eastern boundary of the great Burmese plain, but the ridge is but the screen to a maze of ranges and cross ranges, lofty downs and table-lands, rising sometimes in the Shan States to a height of 8000 feet. To the south this eastern horn divides; one division runs down between the Sittang and Salween rivers and is known as the Karen Hills; the other crosses the Salween and continues in a series of lesser ranges down the whole extent of the Malay Peninsula. Along and among these Eastern hills, now beyond them, now through them, runs the Salween, the longest, though not the greatest, river in Burma, how long is not known, but it is certainly not less than 2000 miles, for its unknown sources lie in Tibet to the N.W. of Lhasa. Without tributaries of any importance it cleaves its way through gorges, which for persistence and length have no rival in the world, "the biggest rift in the earth's surface," till it runs out at Moulmein into the Gulf of Martaban. It is a lonely river, for rapids 100 miles from its mouth bar the way of ships, and it rises, in the rains, throughout its course by as much as 70 to 90 feet.

Between the two great ranges, East and West, lie the rich plains of Burma. The Sittang rises in the Karen Hills and runs north for 50 miles; then,

emerging in the plains, bends south. It hugs the eastern ridges, and drains a rich though not extensive district. It is famous for its bore or tidal wave, created by its trumpet-shaped mouth, and the narrowing shores of the Gulf of Martaban.

Burma proper is, however, the land of the Irrawaddy. Its source is still a mystery, but it probably rises within the borders of what is provisionally known as British Burma, amid the tangle of hills and forest, described politically as "unadministered territory". The streams which drain every valley make two great streams, which, at the "confluence," 20 miles north of Myitkyina, unite to form the Irrawaddy. At Myitkyina the stream is a quarter of a mile wide, and runs through 100 miles of forest, all scarlet and white with blossom when the writer saw it one February, to Sinbo. There it enters the third defile, 40 miles of savage hill country, where the river is sometimes crushed to a width of 50 yards, and rises in the rains by as much as 70 feet. Government launches ply the defile in the dry weather, but in the rains they are deserted. Certain courageous spirits have dared the swollen passage in the native "dug-outs," but not until they have paid the passage money down to the "heirs, administrators and assigns" of their pilots. There are other "defiles," the second below Bhamo, and the third above Mandalay, but from Bhamo onwards the river may be said to run through the plains for 900 miles. It is a great river, 2 miles wide in places even in the dry season, but broadening out to anything from 3 to 5 miles in the rains, a maze

of shifting channels. It is full of life, Burmese "paddy" or rice boats, and rafts of timber and jars on the way to Rangoon markets, and all the fleet of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Co. passenger boats, flats, and oil boats, an epitome of the busy life of Burma. Its most picturesque features below Bhamo are the second defile, where the cliffs rise 800 feet sheer; the forests and mountains of Katha; the first defile above Mandalay; the pagoda-crowned hills of Sagaing; the solitary extinct volcano summit of Popa (5000 feet) which accompanies the voyager during three days of travel; the great bend round Pagan, where the ruins of Burma's greatest capital line the left bank mile after mile; Prome, where the river narrows to a mile and rises 36 feet in the rains; and the Customs Hill,<sup>1</sup> whither, says tradition, came the merchants of India when the Irrawaddy flowed out to sea in one broad estuary. Here, however, the Delta now begins, a great triangle, 150 miles each way, and the river divides and subdivides, and through eight or nine great channels pours out a yellow flood which colours the sea 100 miles from the shore.

Globe-trotters avoid the Delta, hasten by rail and by night from Rangoon to Prome and so take boat to Mandalay, but to those who know it the Delta has its own charm, not only in the rains when the yellow waters burst the Bunds, and almost suggest that the earth has disappeared and the fountains of the great deep are broken up, but even in the dry weather when the yellow sands blend at sunset with the opalescent

<sup>1</sup> Akaoktung.

hues of the sky and Burma is once again the Land of Gold.

So much for the main features of Burma. We have described it "geographically," as it would appear to anyone descending, as the first inhabitants must have done, from north to south. Let us now try and get a more detailed picture, entering it, as the English official, trader, missionary, and traveller usually does from the south.

What strikes the new arrival most, especially if he comes from the brown plains of India, as he lies off Rangoon in the Rangoon river, waiting for his ship to come up to the wharves, is the greenness. And the impression remains when he lands. Trees are everywhere. All the principal streets cut one another at right angles, and are planted with trees, affording delightful vistas of green, up which you look to the great Pagoda, or down to the busy river.

In the town of Rangoon stucco-covered brick is fast taking the place of the mat and wooden houses and sheds of early days, but in the suburbs the European official and merchant still dwells more often than not in a bungalow of wood, or in one of which the upper story is of wood, and the roofs, with their red-brown wooden tiles steeped in earth oil, the crude unrefined product of the petroleum wells, peep out picturesquely from among the trees.

In and around a bungalow, on the outskirts of Rangoon, it is possible to make a very fair working acquaintance with the "fauna" and "flora" of the country.

The "compound," a sort of general eastern equivalent for "garden," "court," or "yard," will be studded with trees, huge padauk, gold mohur, mango, and palms of many sorts, and perhaps great clumps of bamboo, 50 or 60 feet high; at a little distance from the bungalow are the "go-downs," or huts, where dwell the native servants, Madrassis and Punjabis from India, and around their huts will grow papayas and bananas, or, to speak more correctly, plantains. Fruit in Burma is perhaps a little disappointing; mango, plantain, papaya, and melons of various sorts, custard apples, small oranges from the Karen Hills, and mangosteen from Penang, almost exhaust the lot. Jack fruit, durian, and water-melons are not much affected by the European. The compound looks its best during the rains from June till October, and in the first cool months of November and December. Then the heat begins to accumulate, and the compound to dry up, until dust-storms in April and May herald the approach of the S.W. monsoon. Yet it is in the heat that the big trees are most glorious; the great padauk thrice puts on its garment of yellow before the rains begin, and fills the morning air with scent, and the gold mohur blazes in the heat, a mass of crimson glory. Ground flowers do not flourish, except in the cool fringes of the forests; there is too much water in the rains, and none in the dry weather, but cannas, caladiums, and colius flourish, and there is abundance of shrubs with gorgeous foliage, such as the croton and poinsettia, and in the shade of the bungalow verandah maiden-hair and eucharist lilies thrive.





BURMESE BOAT (LOUNG) IN FULL SAIL, IN THE DELTA OF THE IRRRAWADDY



ELEPHANT, WITH BURMESE MAN, CUTTING TEAK



Insect life abounds; flies and ants of every kind and size; the dinner table by lamplight is a veritable menagerie; fire-flies spangle the darkness; flying ants leave their wings by the myriad on your floor, and you return from a week's tour up country to find that the white ants have eaten through your books and music, or have undermined the poles which support your roof; of mosquitoes there is no need to speak. Little yellow lizards come out in the evening to hunt for flies on the walls where the lamps are fixed, and chirrup all the night, while familiar to every one in Burma is the "Tucktoo," so called from its cry; a great lizard some 9 inches long. In the ditches around the bungalow, which carry off the rain, the frogs abound, though except in the rains, and then at night, they are little in evidence. The sounds of the tropical night, in the rains, when the bull frogs maintain a steady two-noted croak (F and C bass clef) and are answered by a myriad crickets, cicada, and beetles, must be heard to be realized. Perhaps wakefulness magnifies, but it is certainly terrific. The rains too bring other visitors. Scorpions, drowned out of their holes, "move in" to the shelter of the verandah, and snakes coil themselves up in dry corners. Few people ever see the great hamadryad or king cobra, or the giant python; they lurk in the cool forests, but cobras are sufficiently common, and kraits and Russell's vipers, and a hundred other sorts, some deadly, some harmless. Life, however, in Burma must not be considered as a continuous battle with snakes; they have very particular reasons for keeping out of

the way. Birds in the compound will be many; sparrows and bulbuls; mynahs, something like a starling; small parrots; crows in legion, the thieves and scavengers of the land; while in the cool weather the white "paddy birds" or egrets come south; there is no need to pluck the feathers from their tails, they fall on you as they preen themselves in the trees above.

It is very easy for the globe-trotter, by whatever way he leaves Rangoon, to get an utterly false impression of the country. If he takes steamboat—the great flat-bottomed boats of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Co., in the luxurious fore cabins of which travel a few Europeans, while on the great open deck lie, eat, and sleep free from care a thousand Indians and Burmese—and travels through the Delta to Bassein, he very likely imagines that he is passing through tropical forest. The route lies across the main channels of the Irrawaddy, through a hundred creeks and pools, where tide and currents seem to set in all directions at once, and some are so narrow that the trees on the marshy banks brush the sides of the steamboat as it passes, but all fringed with a growth so luxuriant that, especially at night, when the way is found by electric searchlight, it seems like fairy-land. Yet the "forest" is a delusion; it is only a narrow screen of trees and palms and giant grasses, and behind it lie stretched out and open some of the richest rice fields of Burma.

On the other hand, if the traveller goes by rail to Pegu, and so on to Mandalay, he gets the impression

that Burma is a cultivated land, for out of Rangoon he passes through a broad plain, brown and bare in the dry weather, then turning to green as the rains pour down, and to gold when they come to a close. But Burma is not a cultivated land, though the area under cultivation is increasing. Of its 239,000 square miles only 21,000 are under tillage. Paint the Delta yellow, carry the yellow round by Pegu to Martaban; draw a narrow yellow band along the railways to Toungoo and Prome, and you have the chief rice-growing districts of Burma. As a matter of fact, the forest, though but a narrow belt, comes right up to Rangoon itself. Forest and suburbs intermingle. As it trends north the forest widens and becomes wilder. Tiger can be shot within 15 miles of Rangoon, and wild elephants roam the hills east of Tharrawaddy. Railways and river are but narrow highways through a land of forest and jungle; forests fill the gaps between, and roll away east and west into the tangled masses of hills. It is a haunt of every kind of wild life—peacock and jungle-fowl, herons, and wild duck on the meres, deer, wild oxen, leopard, and rhinoceros.

So far our description has been mainly of Lower Burma. But the traveller to Mandalay, who leaves Rangoon by an evening train, awakens somewhere about the twentieth parallel, just north of Pyinmana, to find himself in a country of another sort. He is in the "dry zone" of Burma.

The S.W. monsoon, blowing off the steamy Indian Ocean, brings the rains in May, and along the coast-

lands of Arakan and Tenasserim, i.e. the coast which looks due west, the rainfall from May to October is 200 to 250 inches. In the Delta, and around Rangoon, it is 100 inches, and in the districts behind, about 10 inches less. It is the land of rice fields and dense forest. But north of the twentieth parallel, the winds, deprived of their moisture by the hills and forests of Lower Burma, blow over the dry zone, and the fall is from 15 to 20 inches. The dry zone stretches to beyond Mandalay and Shwebo; it is an irregular circle with Mount Popa as a centre, and a diameter of about 200 or 250 miles. It is at once the coolest and hottest climate in Burma, similar in some respects to the Punjab, a veritable bakehouse in May, but cool and draughty when the occasional storms break in July and August, and sometimes even cold in December and January, a land of dry sandy river-beds, palms, cactus, and dwarf trees, a country of sparse villages, thin population, and cultivation in patches; but on the whole healthier for Europeans, and a paradise to the overworked official from the Delta. But north of Mandalay and Shwebo, i.e. north of the twenty-fifth parallel, and away on the Eastern plateaux of the Shans, the forest and hills begin again, and many of the climatic features of Lower Burma recur.

To get an idea of the incidence of the rain and the extent of the forests is to get an idea also of its products. Of mineral wealth there is probably great store, but as yet it has hardly been touched. Jade and amber are worked by the wild tribes on the far northern borders. The ruby mines, 100 miles north

of Mandalay, are famous, and there is iron, lead, silver, and copper awaiting the finding, and the war has probably familiarized even Europeans in Burma for the first time with the tungsten<sup>1</sup> of Tavoy. But the main products of Burma are rice, oil, and teak. Of rice we have said something, and shall say more. Of oil it is enough to say that it is a product of the dry zone. The oil wells are found at Yénan-gyaung and Yénan-gyat (Yénan is Burmese for "smelly water"), opposite and below Pagan on the middle Irrawaddy. In the old days the right to dig was vested in a few families, and the oil was sold to the King alone. Their rights are still respected, and they have their "reserve," but the industry is in European hands and increasing by leaps and bounds, and a pipe, 275 miles long, now carries the oil to the refineries at Syriam near Rangoon, and illuminating oil and petrol, refined in Burma, are at last displacing foreign supplies in the Indian market.

But if there is romance in trade, in Burma it clings to the teak. No visit, however short, is complete for the globe-trotter without a visit to the timber yards to see the "elephants a-piling teak," and he takes away memories of the great pillars in the old palace at Mandalay, and in the church built for S.P.G. by King Mindohn Min. There are 120,000 square miles of forest and 20,000 are worked by Government for teak. Teak was always a royal tree, and none could be felled without a royal licence, and the rule still

<sup>1</sup> A mineral used for tempering steel; therefore needed for the making of munitions.

holds. No doubt, as the Forest Department increases in strength, other trees, quite as useful, will come into the market, but if "oak" stands for everything that is best in "English," so teak recalls Burma, the carved eaves of its palaces, the graceful spires of its monasteries, and that life of the forest, away from the corrupting influences of Rangoon, where the Burman is ever seen at his best, and in which we pray he may pass some day, happy as ever, an unspoilt child, into the many-sided life of the Kingdom of God.



## CHAPTER II.

### A PEOPLE IN SILK.

TWELVE million people, according to the last census, inhabit Burma, but it is not easy to classify them. Of course English domination has prepared the way for the immigration of samples of every people of the East and West, and over forty languages, it is said, are to be heard in the streets of Rangoon. But centuries before the English conquest, the land had become, ethnologically, an Indo-Chinese puzzle. The reason is not far to seek. In the middle of a great continent you may possibly come across a homogeneous race which has maintained its own characteristics and gradually elbowed out of its way anything which is alien to it, but here in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula you have, as it were, a cul-de-sac, into which race after race has hacked its way, or been thrust by others, a bay or creek into which wave after wave has rolled from the great sea outside, losing its force in rippled confusion.

I. Who the first inhabitants of Burma were we do not know. Among the exquisite islands of the Mergui Archipelago in the far south lurk a curious tribe of sea-gypsies. The Burmese call them *Selung*, or Salon; for themselves they are the *Mawken* (i.e. drowned in

the sea). They live a wandering life in their boats or on the beaches of lonely islands, subsisting on roots, cocoanuts, and fish, fugitives, though no longer hunted. A generation ago they numbered a few thousands; in another they will be a few hundreds. Something has been done to evangelize them. But ethnologists contend that they are Malayo-Polynesians with affinities among the Negritos of the Philippines, and that once they occupied the mainland of Burma.

With the exception, however, of the Mawken and also of Dravidian immigrants from India, to whom we shall presently allude, the whole of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula has been peopled by folk of *Mongolian* race.

1. First came the *Môn-Hkmers*. They came so long ago that they have no tradition of their original home. Once they held sway over the whole of Further India. Now they are broken, and a few far-scattered fragments, besides the Môn of the Lower Burma coastlands, betray their former ubiquity. Their achievements as a race, however, are due rather to an immigrant civilization from Southern India, and we shall return to them by and by.

2. After the Môn-Hkmers, came other masses which may be conveniently grouped as *Tibeto-Burmese*. They came from the north, from both sides of the Himalayan range, from the fastnesses of Tibet, or the valleys of Nepaul and Bhutan.

Of these the *Chins* have gradually moved down the great mountain ranges of the West. The Burmese regard them as their "younger brother," and their uncouth

habits enable us, say some, to envisage the Burmese of 1500 to 2000 years ago. They have always clung to the hills, but a generation or two of British occupation is beginning to take effect, and for better or worse the Chins are beginning to descend to the plains, especially in the Prome and Thayetmyo districts of Burma.

Their kindred, the *Burmese*, of whom more anon, probably arrived in the Irrawaddy Valley about 600 B.C. and have spread steadily south, driving the other tribes back into the hills to the east and west of the central plain, and gradually overwhelming the Môn to the south.

Behind the Burmese came their cousins the *Ching-paw* (or, as we call them, the *Kachins*)—or perhaps they met from either side of the Himalaya, and the shock turned the Burmese to the south. The Ching-paw occupy all the tangled masses of hill to the north-west and north-east of the Irrawaddy sources and head waters, and have brought the same pressure to bear on the Burmese as the Burmese did on the races before them. That pressure has only been averted in the last generation, when the British annexation of Upper Burma saved the Burmese from their wild cousins to the north. The traveller to the north on the last hundred miles of the Burma railways still passes through a great plain once cultivated, but forsaken before the terrors of Chingpaw invasion. The process of immigration still goes on, but it is controlled by the strong hand of the British Raj.

Who the *Burmese* were, and whence came their

name, is still a mystery. Some would trace them to Tibet or Western China, but evidence would seem to be accumulating for bringing them from the southern slopes of the Himalaya. In that case they would be, as Sir George Scott terms them, a "blood brother" to those Mongolian folk, amongst whom the Aryan Gautama, for the Sakyas<sup>1</sup> were no doubt Aryans, first preached the doctrines of Buddhism, and amongst whom he made his most ready converts. The Burmese Chronicles claim that their earliest kings came from the neighbourhood of the Buddha's home, and settled on the Irrawaddy, and such traditions cannot altogether be set aside. Perhaps some day the jungle-covered ruins of Tagaung on the Irrawaddy, 150 miles above Mandalay, will yield up their secrets and help to a decision.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A tribe on the borders of Nepaul, about 550 B.C., amongst whom Gautama, the Buddha, was born.

<sup>2</sup> A North-Indian origin also seems connoted by the name of Burma, if what Sir George Scott says is correct: "The early Indian settlers gave to them the name of Brahma, and this was adopted by the people themselves. The name of Brahma is that used in Buddhist sacred books for the first inhabitants of the world. This is now written Myamma—and is pronounced Bama. Brahma-desa is the name commonly given to Burma by Cinghalese monks. But first the late Bishop Bigandet, and Forchammer, and after them Mr. G. H. Parker, contest this, and will have it that Man, Myan, or Myen was the original name. It is asserted that this theory is supported by the circumstance that the Kachins call the Burmese Myen and the Shans Man; but this is merely the Chinese name for the country, and all Kachins, and very many northern Shans, know Chinese and no doubt adopted the Chinese name. Mr. Parker makes a point of the fact that the Chinese only began to know the Burmese by the name of Mien in or about the year A.D. 1000 and did not give Burma the name by which they now know it of Mien-tien until 1497. But Mien is just

3. After the Tibeto-Burmese came one last wave of migration into Burma, the *Shans* and *Karens*. The *Shans* are familiar figures in the Chinese annals, and for centuries resisted the Chinese power. They call themselves Tai and held sway in Yunnan and their capital was Tali-fu, and it was only by Kublai Khan in the fourteenth century that they were finally subjugated to the Chinese Empire. The Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, was present in the great Khan's armies and has told the tale. Conquest by the Chinese increased the pressure which for centuries the Shans had been bringing to bear on the Burmese from the east. Their search for new territory is part of the mediæval history of Burma, and after a brave attempt at domination they were either assimilated by the Burmese of the plains or confined to the hill fastnesses which are known to-day as the Shan States. But far-flung colonies and little principalities on the River Chindwin still remain as monuments of the time when Shans ruled in Upper Burma. The most notable swarm went further south, and became the creators of the Kingdom of Siam.

The Shans have a genius for disunion.<sup>1</sup> They have not fought to any extent among themselves, but they have never achieved unity, and to the present day they remain in their hills, a body of dissociated states, some fifty of which are part of our Province of Burma, the biggest as large as Wales, and the smallest no bigger than a big English parish.

the form which Bram would take in the mouth of the heavy-tongued Chinamen, and the Ma is simply an honorary affix."

Akin to the Shans are the *Karens*. They seem to have entered Burma from South-Western China, forced on ahead by the Shans, and then shepherded into the hills again by the Burmese and Môn. They fall into three main divisions, Bghai, Sgau, and Pwo. The Bghai live in the hills to the south-and south west of the Shan States, the Sgau in the Paung Laung Range between the Sittang and Salween, while the Pwo are found scattered on the eastern slopes of the Arakan Yoma, the Pegu Yoma, and along the hills of Tenasserim at the back of Moulmein and Tavoy. No race in Burma has so readily accepted Christianity.

One more migration and then we have done, and we shall, approximately, have arrived at some idea of the distribution of the peoples of Burma. It is a migration not of Mongolians but of *Dravidians*.<sup>1</sup> There seems always to have been a movement across the seas from the teeming lands of Telingana in the Deccan and the mouths of the Kistna and Godaveri Rivers to the coastlands of Burma and the mouths of the Irrawaddy, Sittang, and Salween. To-day it is the coolies who come to do the work into which all the hustling of the West cannot hurry the casual Burmese, but in the early days, if the legends are to be believed, centuries before and centuries after the beginning of the Christian era, it was not coolies who came but merchants and princes and Buddhist missionaries. The Indian brought with him the culture of

<sup>1</sup> A general name for the early Non-Aryan peoples of the south of India.

India. He found a savage people whom he despised, and described as Naga or Monsters. But the Nagma or she-dragon was fair and attractive, and so in time grew up a race among the coastlands which had the Mongolian features and form of the Môn, but to a limited extent the civilization of India. This seems to be the most reasonable explanation of that *Môn-Talaing* race, for a thousand years at once the rival of the Burmese and the chief fountain of their civilization. It has been argued that Talaing is the Môn for "down-trodden," and represents the condition of the people at the hands of the Burmese in later days. But the name existed before, and certainly in this book it will be taken as deriving from that Indian land which has in great part given to Burma its letters, though not its language, and much of its civilization and its faith.

II. The Englishman who lands in Rangoon to-day looks round at first in vain for any signs of the people of the land. He sees the Indian coolie at work on the wharves, clad only in a loin cloth, or in scanty attire of muslin and cotton, blue and red; or in the streets, a heterogeneous mass of folk, mostly in the dirty white of India, Madrassis, Bengalis, Punjabis, and a goodly company of Chinese.

But by and by, perhaps in the higher regions of the town, where the roads converge on the great Pagoda, his attention is compelled by a group of the most gaily dressed people he has ever seen, and he is told that these are Burmese.

There is not much difference in the attire, in fact it is not very easy at first to distinguish the sexes,

for the men are beardless, and even moustaches are rare. Men and women each wear a little cotton coat of spotless white, wide-sleeved, reaching barely to the waist, and each wears a gorgeous-coloured skirt; the men call theirs a "paso," the women "tamein"; there is more stuff in the man's and he flings the end over his shoulder, but both gird them round the waist, and tuck in the ends, much as we should tuck in a bath-towel. Round the head the men wear a kerchief; it is not a turban, and only the Burmese know how to arrange it so jauntily; the women wear a similar kerchief about chest and neck, and put flowers and sometimes jewels in their raven black hair.

The skirt is generally of silk, a rough woven silk which washes for ever, but cotton is worn on journeys and at work. Much of the silk is imported from China, but some is grown in Burma, though Buddhism condemns the growers to fearful torments, for the growing entails the death of the silkworm, and therefore the breaking of the first Buddhist commandment.

Laughing and talking, they go their way up to the Pagoda, regardless of the new world closing in upon them, the men in front, the women trailing along behind, for they are lower in the scale of life than the men; and if it is the end of the rains, and the green of the trees is fresh, and the dust of the tropics has not yet begun to gather, there is no more gorgeous sight than a Burmese crowd, for no folk seem more able, in their dress, to blend every colour of the rainbow without offending the eye. No wonder the



peacock, gay and swaggering, is the national emblem of Burma, and no wonder a recent writer on Burma chose for the title of his book "The Silken East".

Most likely this gaily attired crowd comes from anywhere but Rangoon, for the Burman is not at home in towns, and least of all in the great city which is growing up round the shrine of the Shwé Dagon. He is a villager and small farmer—of the population of 12,000,000, only about 10 per cent are urban. Rangoon in the last half-century has multiplied five-fold; its population is now 300,000, but only a tenth are Burmese. Mandalay is about half its size, and a greater proportion of the people are Burmese, and Moulmein is half as large as Mandalay. There are about a dozen other towns with a population of 15,000 and over. But the bulk of the Burmese people are agricultural, dwelling, however, not in scattered homesteads, but gathered for society and mutual defence in villages. There were over 60,000 such villages in 1891, and the average population of each was 157.

In Lower Burma, especially in the Delta districts, the villages lie open; they usually line the creeks and rivers; the huts stand on piles in the water, each with its little pier or landing stage; scores of canoes flit in and out, and the naked children fling themselves into the water, as steamboats and launches go by, to rollick in the waves. It is the same life there in the tropics, but under more delightful conditions, which the people of Europe were living thousands of years ago in the lake villages of Switzerland, or among the Somersetshire marshes.

But in Upper Burma, especially in districts where Dacoity has not long been suppressed, the villages are surrounded by stockades consisting of *chevaux de frise* of bamboos with sharp ends pointing upwards, or formed of thorny branches and prickly shrubs. Sometimes for better defence a number of villages have been grouped together. All have their gates and little wooden watch-houses.

Let us take by way of example a village in the plains between Rangoon and Pegu. It is a collection of forty huts or more. Each hut is a one-storied building, oblong in shape, raised 7 or 8 feet above the ground, with perhaps six posts to support the corners and the middle; the walls are of bamboo matting, and the roof of palm-leaf thatch. The house is open to the front, where a verandah, of the same material as the house, runs along at a slightly lower level. The furniture is simplicity itself; a few mats to sleep on, a long dish or tray round which the family sit and eat with their fingers, a few cooking pots and water-jars. Of course in Rangoon and the big towns the life is becoming "Westernized," and houses are springing up of wood and brick, and two-storied (though the Burman hates to have anyone of inferior degree above his head, especially a woman), and furnished in a Western manner; but a chair is still expressed by the word "what a foreigner sits on".

Each house stands apart, in its little plot, or in a little compound or court, shadowed by bananas and palms. There are few fairer sights than a Burmese

A BURMESE VILLAGE





village, especially when it lines a creek, or huddles beside the forest. Fire, especially in Upper Burma, is a great danger. The writer remembers one such calamity, where a fire broke out in a house at 3 p.m. and before 4.30 p.m. 600 houses had been swept out of existence. Always outside the house, by order of the law, hangs a crook to pull off the thatch when a neighbour's house is on fire, and a large flapper to beat it out.

The village has a headman, assisted by a sort of parish council of elders, who is responsible for the order of the village, and for the collection of the taxes. Through him the English magistrate is kept informed of the order and well-being of his district.

The little farms of the villagers are patches of rice land, from 10 to 20 acres, outside the village. The rains break in May, and in June the ground is soft enough for ploughing, or rather scratching with a sort of heavy three-toothed harrow of wood drawn by water buffaloes. Meantime on somewhat higher ground the farmer has grown a little nursery of rice plants, which, in August, when about a foot high, are transferred to the fields, where they are planted by women in the soft mud, much as we plant cabbages. Rice needs much water, and to keep it standing each plot of an acre or so is surrounded by little banks, so that the whole Delta country is a mass of irregular chequers. The rains tail off in October, and in November and December the rice, now the height of a man, is reaped. Only the ears are cut with the sickle, the straw being burnt in February and March,

and supplying the only manure which the paddy or rice lands get. But long before then the rice is threshed, trodden out, Bible fashion, by the oxen, winnowed and carted away to the railway, if sufficiently near. Or, if the village is near a creek or river, it is stowed away in the rice boat, and the farmer, who is as handy with the paddle as the plough, is soon dropping down with the tide to Rangoon, Bassein, or Moulmein, to sell his produce to the European miller. In the dry climate of Upper Burma life is harder, and rice is not the only crop. Millet, cotton, and sesamum are grown, and the rice has to be cultivated by irrigation. Still, work is not hard as we in Europe count it hard, while in the wet zone of Lower Burma it is ridiculously easy. "The tickling of the soil is enough to make it laugh with a harvest."

Yet the Burman is not rich. In the old days of native rule sumptuary laws prohibited undue expenditure, and the money went in "works of merit," Monasteries and Rest Houses (i.e. open shelters for travellers), and Pagodas; and to-day, though the sumptuary laws are gone, and "works of merit" under Western influences are becoming fewer, the Burman does not save. He hires Indian coolie labour to reap his fields, spends largely on Pwés, the theatrical representations which he loves so well, representations of the Jataka or Birth Stories, which depict one or other of the 550 lives through which Gautama passed ere he became the Buddha, and which the Burman will spend all night in the dry weather beholding.

Often enough he has his land mortgaged up to the hilt to Indian money-lenders, and would so more often if it were not for the thrift of his wife. For it is the observation of all who know Burma, that, however much the woman is supposed to lag behind the man in the spiritual scale, she at any rate is the more level headed, the manager, full of common sense as well as charm. Says a lifelong observer, comparing the women of Japan to those of Burma:—

Both are frank and unaffected; but the Burmese woman is far ahead of her husband in the matter of business capacity, and the Japanese woman is equally far behind. The Japanese wife is not only supposed to obey her husband, but actually does so. The Burmese wife shows her capacity by the way in which she rules the household without seeming to exercise authority. The Japanese treats her husband as an idol, the Burmese as a comrade. Both have the power of beauty without the possession of it.

Such is the Burmese village life to-day. But there is another type of village and field cultivation, which you find in the Karen Hills, and is not only characteristic of most of the hill folk to-day, but is much more illustrative of what Burmese life was at the dawn of history, and we need some account of it to complete our picture.

East of the railway from Pegu to Toungoo, in the maze of ranges and cross ranges, 3000 to 6000 feet high, densely covered with forest, live the main body of the Karens. Their villages lie high for defence, and just below the summits for shelter. The houses are of bamboo, and built on stilts, not dissimilar to those of the Burmese, but not so tidy or picturesque.

They do not stand in little compounds surrounded by palms and bananas, but huddled together in groups, and sometimes the village is just one big barrack with compartments for different families. Nor is the Karen dress, though seemly enough, so fetching as the Burmese; short dark trousers for the men, and a petticoat for the women, with blue embroidered cloth smock for both reaching to the knees.

Cultivation is "extensive" and "common"; that is to say, instead of each householder having his own little farm, and working it from year to year, the village community clears a patch of forest on the hill-side, and works it in common, and then abandons it, and clears another patch the following year. About February the patch is chosen, 4 to 8 acres perhaps, and preferably of bamboo and lighter forest. All growth is cut to shreds, and left to dry, and about April, before the rains set in, is burnt. In the ground thus prepared a double crop is sown in alternate rows, rice, which is reaped in November, and cotton, which is gathered later. For the following year another patch is chosen, and then when the hill-sides round the village are exhausted, the whole community moves away to another site, and fields and village are left a prey to noisome weeds. Sometimes the forest reasserts its sway, but often the heavy rains wash the exposed soil from the steep hill-sides, and leave nothing but the bare rock. It is a wasteful system of cultivation. The traveller on the way to Mandalay can see to the East the steep escarpment of the Shan Hills, where this "taung-ya" or "hill



cultivation " has transformed forest-clad hills into a scorched and barren ridge. And not only is it wasteful, but it affects the climate and the rains. It may be that the "dry zone" of Burma has been largely created by this "extensive" or "nomadic" cultivation. At any rate the Government now discourages it, and tries to entice the hill folk to the richer plains below, and gives them land, and they rapidly take to Burmese dress and custom. Still so shy are the hill folk, and so extensive and remote the hills, and so hard for the forest officer to work with any profit, that for generations to come the people will work their hills in the old "taung-ya" way.

So much then for the general features of the land and its folk. Our task may now be said to be three-fold: first, to study their religions; second, to ask what the influence of those religions has been on their history and village life; and then last of all to consider how the Christian message has come to them, and what hope there is that it will enable them to play their part in the mysterious fellowship of the world.

## CHAPTER III.

### A HAUNTED WORLD.

THESE MÔNS and Burmese, Chins and Kachins, Shans and Karens, as we call them now, though we hardly know what names they bore then, whom we find at the dawn of history on the coasts of the Land of Gold, and in the dim tracts of forest and mountain behind, what was their religion?

There seems to be no doubt that it was animism. If we look at a map of the religions of the world, we find these regions painted yellow, the yellow of the robe of the Buddhist monk. But yellow is hardly the colour, even now, for any part of Indo-China, for wherever Buddhism has not penetrated, among the hill fastnesses of Chins, Kachins and Karens, or other folk, the people still remain, in the bulk, animists, and among them we can study animism at first hand. And even if the Burmese and Shans are represented as yellow in the map, it ought to be a very streaky yellow, with the dark lines of paganism across it, for it was the verdict of the census reports of 1891 and 1901 that Buddhism, in Burma, is but a veneer laid over a main structure of animistic belief.

I. This is not a work on animism, so it will be sufficient to take two brief definitions of it. Dr.

(30)

Kennedy (of Chota Nagpur) defines it as "the worship of spirits as distinguished from that of gods". Professor A. H. Sayce, speaking of the religion of Sumerians and Accadians, Turanian or Mongolian folk, who inhabited the plains of Babylonia 5000 years ago, and whose social life and civilization, as laid bare to us by archæology, often finds illustration and explanation in Mongolian life to-day, says: "According to the Sumerian idea every object and force in nature had its *Zi*, or 'spirit,' which manifested itself in life and motion. The *Zi* was sometimes malignant, but it could be controlled by the incantations and spells which were known to the sorcerer priests." It is the religion of the childhood of the human race, for just as children attribute to their toys and pets, and other objects, a spirit or life similar to that of which they themselves are conscious, so primitive man regarded the objects on which his eyes rested as alive, in much the same way as he felt himself to be alive.

All the main characteristics of animism can be studied in Burma.

1. In the first place, natural objects are regarded as the habitation of spirits, *Nâts* the Burmese call them (possibly from the Sanscrit "*Nath*," a "*Lord*"). They abide in innumerable places, trees and rocks, and even in the greater natural objects such as mountains and rivers. Byingyi, the great hill 6000 feet high, which juts out into the plain near Pyinmana, where the Sittang breaks from the mountains, is, according to the Karens, the home of a very powerful spirit, and the Burmese say the same of the great

cone of Popa. It is, however, an easy next step to separate the spirit from the object to which it belonged, and so, for the animist, the world has become haunted with spirits, disembodied, and impersonal, of flood and fell, dogging your footsteps in the jungle, day and night, tripping you up as you make your way along the narrow mountain paths, leading you into the quagmires, or dropping loose stones upon you from the hills above. In fact, animism is not only a religion, but a philosophy; it provides an explanation for most problems of life; it explains accidents, sickness, and infectious disease. All are the work of spirits, whose pride is hurt or whose haunts are disturbed, or of human spirits, which, in shuffling off this mortal coil, hand on deliberately to others the disease of which they themselves have died. Some of these spirits may be good, and some evil, but unfortunately it is a selfish human instinct, not only observable in individuals, but in Governments, to leave your friends alone, and to keep your blandishments only for suspected enemies. And so, "spirit worship" resolves itself into the propitiating of evil spirits, and the averting of their wrath by sacrifices. Karens will never leave their clearings in the hills and search for new habitations, and never enter upon the work of sowing their fields without first offering pigs, dogs, and fowls to propitiate the spirits of air and earth and forest, or sacrificing a fowl and testing its bones or liver to know if the omens are propitious. Perhaps long ago there was a certain method in the madness; the "physique" of wild pig, or jungle fowl, was a



NAT SHRINE AT MYANTOO, IN UPPER BURMA.  
Offerings are placed in it for the spirits which live in the area  
behind.  
(See p. 92)



GEORGE KYA NIN, FORMERLY CATECHIST, NOW ORDAINED  
PRIEST, CHRIST CHURCH, MANDALAY, ON NATIVE DRESS



very real criterion as to the goodness or badness of any given site or village or field, of its healthiness or fertility, but the original meaning has been lost, and the common sense act has become merely senseless magic.

2. Such disembodied spirits are continually being reinforced by the spirits of the dead. Dr. Kennedy, describing the burial customs of the Mundas of Central India, tells us of the efforts made to induce the spirit of the dead to return to his home, and become, with other ancestors, a household spirit. He considers that compassion is, in this, the determining factor. The spirit of the dead is considered as having a "thin" time, clothed in a "scanty and impalpable body," and something must be done to help it.

Somewhat akin is a custom at Burmese burials. At the grave, the oldest male relative calls to the *Leipbya*, the "butterfly" or spirit of the deceased, to come away. It is "caught" dexterously in a handkerchief, and carried home and imprisoned in the house seven days. Only so can it be prevented from becoming an evil spirit. But as often as not, especially among the hill tribes, the main object of the mourners is to get the spirit away from the house, and imprison it in the grave, and prevent its return to haunt them. The Chins stretch a thread across running water to help the spirit on its way—going to the grave, but not returning; and the wild Wás make the entrance to their villages crooked that the spirits may lose their way and wander elsewhere.

As for people who are executed, or meet a violent

death, they always haunt the place where they are killed. The writer remembers a very pathetic appeal from a condemned criminal to the doctor, who was showing him round the gaol at Bassein, not to keep his spirit in bond, but to allow it to wander forth into the jungle outside.

Thus the ranks of the spirit world are ever being recruited, and the result is a medley of dryads and pixies, ghosts and ghouls, nearly always conceived of as meditating mischief, and so universally crowding in upon poor humanity, that no work can be undertaken, or journey made, without imminent danger of disappointment and disaster.

II. There is another accompaniment of animism, as we find it in Burma—we cannot call it an element of animism, for in that case animism would cease to be animism—and that is the belief in a Supreme Being. Animism, to repeat Dr. Kennedy's definition, is "the worship of spirits as distinguished from gods," but nearly always in the background there lurks a belief in some higher Being, Who loves and cares, perhaps was once able to do more for the poor folk for whom He cares, but seems now to have withdrawn into the shadowy distance.

As to the origin of the belief, students differ. Some see in it the remnant of a universal primitive revelation, while others see in it the testimony of that soul of man which, according to Tertullian, is naturally Christian, the activity of that longing and capacity for fellowship with Himself which God implanted in us when He made us "in His own image," i.e. spiritual beings,



and which is only waiting for His revelation of Himself to draw it out and satisfy its craving.

The presence of such a belief in the peoples of Burma has often been denied, but never by those who have sought to get into sympathetic touch with the deepest religious feelings of the people. Even the Burmese, in whom Buddhism has done its best to atrophy the consciousness of a God for a thousand years and more, when they are in deepest need, will put themselves into a posture of devotion and cry, "Help me, O Lord".

Very pathetic are the legends of the Karens. They believe in a great God, Ywa, but he lives far away in the stars, and has left them to be terrorized by innumerable and jealous spirits. Long ago Ywa gave to the Karen a "writing" on a piece of leather. He gave it to the Burman too, on a palm leaf, and to the Kala or non-Mongolian foreigner on a piece of cloth. But the Karen was lazy, and his land was pleasant, and he paid no attention to the "writing," but left it on a tree-stump while he went on with his work in the forest clearing. Finally it was lost, eaten, say the Karens, by an old sow, and it is to the remissness of his ancestors in not learning the writing and handing it down to him that the Karen ascribes his own ignorance, and his oppression at the hands of the Burmese. There are other legends, startling in their Biblical resemblances, of the Fall and the Flood and the Tower of Babel. Sir George Scott thinks that the Karens may have come into contact with Jewish colonies in China. But, however they came, the

legends constitute a curious ethnological and historical problem, and the story of the lost writing and the belief that one day the "kalas" from across the sea would restore their letters to them have played a great part in the conversion of some of their tribes to Christianity.

The Chins regard the Supreme Being as a female. Mother Hli reigns "on her throne in the heavens," "never growing old and never dying". She created man and imparted to him all the mental and material and spiritual blessings that he enjoys. All men are her children and she loves them, and has given to each nation its language and letters and bounds. But even through Chin tradition there runs the same feeling of being lost, and of an ignorance and helplessness which bewilders, but from which seemingly there is no escape.

Mother Hli laid a hundred eggs and hatched them in cotton-wool. From them sprang a hundred pairs of human beings, progenitors of the different races of mankind. She laid yet another egg, a little one, most beautiful to see. In her affection for it, she did not hatch it but kept it put away, till, thinking it addled, she cast it aside. The king crow, however, saved it and hatched it, and from it came the progenitors of the Chins. To this day the Chins, out of gratitude, never kill or eat the king crow.

There is the same story of the lost "writing" as among the Karens, with variations. Mother Hli gave letters to all the nations. The Burman paid but little attention to the gift, and wrote the letters on leaves

and stones. The Chin, in veneration, wrote his language on deer's skin ; but when no one was by, the dog came along and ate it up. The Chin submitted as patiently as he could, but still hopes, when he eats "dog," as he frequently does, to recover some of the wisdom which the dog then swallowed.

So the hill-man goes his way with the feeling of one deserted and lost, a prey to terrors. There is nothing uplifting in his faith, no conviction even of sin, for the beings he fears are not moral ; they do not punish evil or reward good ; they are not displeased when he is drunken or immoral, but merely capricious, and he offends them as much by an error of judgment as by an act of deliberate wrong. And even his worship does not lift up his heart, for it is not so much worship as cajolery. Nât worshippers propitiate, and, if they pray, don't seek a " presence " but only implore an " absence " ;

The bamboo pipes of spirit, the bones of sacrificial animals, the hatchets, swords, spears, bows and arrows that line the way to a Kachin village, are placed there not with an idea of attracting the spirits, but of preventing them from coming right among the houses in search of their requirements. If they want to drink, the rice spirit has been poured out, and the bamboo stoup is there in evidence of the libation ; the blood-stained skulls of oxen, pigs, and the feathers of fowls show that there has been no stint of meat offerings. Should the Nâts wax quarrelsome, and wish to fight, there are the axes and dabs with which to commence the fray. Only let them be grateful, and leave their trembling worshippers in peace and quietness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shway Yoe, " The Burman : His Life and Notions," p. 231.

III. What actually was the condition of religious belief on the coastlands of Burma at the dawn of history we cannot tell. That it was animism we are sure, for the beliefs of the people, where they have not been modified by Buddhism or Christianity, are still frankly animistic, but as to exactly what form that animism took, we cannot be so sure. We can only illustrate it from the belief and practice of the hill-folk to-day. At the best it was a religion of fear, fear of spirits, and in the background a shadowy Supreme Being who could not or would not help.

The unbeliever or sceptic, who is inclined to question the claims of Christianity to be anything more than one amongst many religions, may sometimes ask what right it has to deny the reasonableness of animism, when its own Scriptures everywhere assert the existence of evil spirits and angels.

We plead guilty to the impeachment, and are quite ready to assert in return that the Christian who wishes to uphold the supremacy of his Faith is not likely to do it by denying the existence of any other spiritual beings than himself and God. That surely would be to create a desert and call it "peace".

We cannot forget that Scripture everywhere asserts the existence of spiritual beings, good and evil, other than man—and that our Lord affirms the same. It may be the mighty "Michael," guardian angel of the Chosen Race, or only the ministering angels of little children who always behold the face of the Heavenly Father and carry to Him the tidings of evil done them and innocence soiled. "What the number of the

angels may be," says Canon Mason in "The Faith of the Gospel," "we can only guess; but there seems nothing unreasonable in the suggestion that everything has its spiritual counterpart, and that, as Origen felt, not a plant of grass or a fly is without its angel." How natural, after all, that the spirit world, which transcends the material, that spirit world which is the reality, and of which the material is but an aspect or mode, should be peopled by beings other than man. How natural that there should be intelligent beings able to take note of the beauty and wisdom of which the world is so eloquent, but which is so often unobserved by us, and find in it occasion for delight and praise.

It has often been said that for the Christian apologist—whether combating heathenism without the Church, or heresy within, whether searching for some basis of union with Christians of other bodies, or exposing the folly of unbelievers—it is always safest and best to affirm his own conviction rather than to deny the convictions of others, for so often there is truth even in error, and wholesale denial of error sometimes leads to the denial of that fragment of truth. It is better to affirm the Truth as it is in Christ, and trust that in the light of it truth will revive and falsehood perish.

So it must be in our efforts to convert and comfort the animist. If the essence of animism is "the worship of spirits as distinguished from that of gods," let us not deny the existence of spirits, but rather affirm the omnipotence and omnipresence of God:—

That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.

The poor animist, after all, may not be wrong in his assertion of "spirits everywhere". Have we not felt it ourselves, on the lonely hills or in the darkling forest? Have we not felt the reality of this haunted world? But where the animist is wrong is in his relegation of God to a dim background of shadows, in doubting His power, in supposing that He has abandoned His creatures and "cares not that they perish". As a result, of course, of his ignorance or denial, he learns to look on a God-forsaken world as haunted by devils, just as his more faulty English brother, who denies his God, soon gives himself up to "mascots" and other superstitious follies. But let the animist but say unto the Lord, "Thou art my hope, and my stronghold," and calm falls on his troubled world.

Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High,  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall  
not be afraid for any terror by night . . . for the pestilence  
that walketh in darkness, nor for the sickness that destroyeth  
in the noon day . . . for He shall give His angels charge  
over thee.

"We are glad," said an old village elder in the Karen village of Swa-lo to the late Bishop of Rangoon, "that we are Christians, for Christianity has brought us light and peace." His "devils" had shrunk away from that light, but the "angels" remained.

But this affirmation of God was yet to come, and so we may picture the poor folk of the Land of Gold at the dawn of history, with their religion of fear and hopeless bewilderment, in a haunted world where men were for ever looking over their shoulders, as it were, for the forms of evil lurking in the gloom.

One thing the experience of later days has taught us. Some higher, though still imperfect, form of faith and culture had only to present itself to be accepted. The disintegration of the animistic religions is a familiar phenomenon to-day. Animism always goes down before the more cultured creed, be it Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism. There are tracts in Africa and Asia, where it is a race between Christianity and Islam, or Christianity and Buddhism for the allegiance of the animistic folk.

But in the far-off days of which we are speaking, there was as yet no question of Christ or Mohammed. Only in India had there arisen one who spoke of "deliverance". No wonder, then, that when the "Voice of the Buddha" was heard sounding through the coastlands of Savarna-Bhumi, people turned to listen. Here at last was a way of escape, a deliverance from fear and sorrow.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A TASTE OF DELIVERANCE.

As the vast ocean, O disciples, is impregnated with one taste, the taste of salt, so also, my disciples, this Law and Doctrine is impregnated with but one taste, with the taste of deliverance.

So spake the Buddha. What then was this Law and Doctrine which some time about the beginning of the Christian era, certainly not earlier than 200 B.C., and certainly not later than A.D. 500, began sounding along the coasts of the Land of Gold, taking its place alongside the older animism?

I. Who was the "Buddha" and what is "Buddhism"?

1. The "Buddha" was born at Kapilavastu on the borders of modern Nepaul about 560 B.C., about the middle of that period which we know as the Jewish Captivity. His father was a chief and wealthy landowner of the tribe of the Sakya. His mother died soon after his birth. He may have received the name of Siddartha, whence the Burmese call him Prince Theidat, but it is by his family name of Gautama that he is generally known. He was married early. His wife's name is uncertain, but there was one child, the boy Rahula.

He might have lived the life of an Indian squire,



and died forgotten, like millions before and since. But he was a man of peculiar temperament. We should feel inclined perhaps to call him morbid. The great heat of India, the long hours in the middle of the day, when by Orientals activity is suspended, inclines the more thoughtful to brood. India again is so vast and so populous, war and disease and famine affect such multitudes, that those who brood are oppressed with the thought of the sadness of life, come to look upon that sadness as the greatest of all evils, and to think of escape from existence as the greatest of good things to desire and strive for.

So Gautama brooded, and at last went forth, like many another ascetically-minded Indian of his day, to find the secret of deliverance and peace. The legends tell how returning home one day he beheld one after another, in stricken human beings, examples of the miseries which befall mankind, poverty, disease, and death, and then beheld the peace on the face of a wandering ascetic. That night he left wife and child and home, donned the yellow robe of the wandering ascetic,<sup>1</sup> and went forth to find the secret of peace.

For long years he sought, and failed to find. He tried many teachers, experimented in the severest asceticism, but found no peace. At length, under the famous Bo-Tree, or Tree of Wisdom, close by where now stands the Temple of Buddha-Gaya, he found the "secret"; he attained, as he believed, the enlighten-

<sup>1</sup> The life of the ascetic or monk, both in community or alone, has been recognized as an expression of the religious life in India from earliest times. It must not be confused with Christian monasticism.

ment he sought; he became the Buddha, i.e. "the awakened one".

2. What was it that he "found"? What was the message of "deliverance" which he decided to proclaim to the world? What are the doctrines of Buddhism? He might of course have come forth from the Bo-Tree with some new teaching about God, His Righteousness and Love and Purpose. But in the higher thought of the India of his day there was no clear sense of the Personality of God, and amongst the more ignorant folk the very idea of God or Gods was overlaid by everything that was impure and horrid. So it is that in the Buddha's message of deliverance there is no word of God. How that affects the message we shall presently see.

In studying Buddhism, we have to distinguish between those teachings which are peculiar to it, and those which it was content to take over, with some modifications, from the older faiths of India; for, as behind Christianity there stands the background of Israel, so Buddhism, as a reforming and Puritan movement, arises from the midst of the India of that day.

We find, then, that Buddhism has retained two older beliefs or ideas—*transmigration* and *karma*.

The idea underlying Transmigration is simplicity itself. It is "that at death the soul passes into other bodies, men or beasts, or even gods. Possibly it is a survival of the older animistic creed, which peopled all things, sun and moon, trees and rocks, men and beasts, with a soul or spirit."

In India, before the time of Gautama, another

doctrine had come to be associated with Transmigration, that of Karma. This had the result of making Transmigration more ethical, for Karma means "action," and the Transmigration-Karma theory taught that a man's position in this life (whether social or otherwise) was a result of his actions in some former life, and that, according to his actions in this life, his position in his next existence, for weal or woe, was being determined. If a man was born dumb it was due to misuse of the tongue in a former life, and if, despite this warning, he added cruelty to his faults, he might become a tiger. In all cases the punishment was supposed to fit the crime.

Buddhism, however, introduced a further difficulty by denying the *individuality of man, the self, or the soul*.

We are, according to the Buddhist Scriptures, a mere bundle of sensations (*skandhas*) or changeful conformations (*sankhāras*); just as the pole and axle and wheels and body make a chariot, and when torn apart cease to be a chariot, so our skin and bones, sensations and perceptions, and so forth, make what we, for the time being, foolishly imagine to be a person or subject; but they have only to break up and fall asunder in death to make us realize there is none.

But if Buddhism denies the existence of the soul, where does it find the link between the different lives in the long chain of Transmigration? What is it that ties my life on to some other past life? The Buddhist answers that it is *tanha* or thirst. In the

Buddhist adaptation of the doctrines of Transmigration and Karma, no soul or consciousness or memory goes over from one body to the other. It is the grasping, the craving still existing at the death of our body, that causes the new set of *skandhas*, that is, the new body with its tendencies and capacities, to arise, and attaches to them the Karma of the past life. In fact, Buddhism presupposes not a Transmigration of souls, but a Transmigration of Karma.

We are now in a position to understand the *distinctive doctrine of Buddhism*.

Gautama's discovery, which came to him under the Bo-Tree, not by revelation (for Buddhism knows nothing of Divine aid) but by intuition, was this. You must overcome the *tanhā*, the thirst, or clinging to existence, not only the desire for evil things, but even the desire for what we should call good things, such as friendship or love. Then at last the chain of Transmigration will be snapped, you become an *Arakat*, free from all fetters, and can peacefully await the end of life, knowing this, that then your Karma will take root in no other life, there will be no rebirth.

It is this peaceful waiting for the end, which comes to all those who have conquered the *tanhā* or thirst (and not merely the non-existence which results from it), which is called the *Nirvana*<sup>1</sup> or the "dying out".

3. With this new doctrine Gautama, now become

<sup>1</sup> For the "Four Noble Truths"—a summary of the Buddha's teaching—see Appendix.

"The Buddha," went forth from the Bo-Tree, and for forty years passed up and down the plains of north-eastern India, along the Ganges, and on the slopes of Nepaul, preaching his doctrine. His practice was to travel in the fine weather, and in the rainy season to settle down in some monastery. Monasteries (Viharas) began to increase—in fact Behar, the holy land of Buddhism, takes its name from them—for it was only by donning the yellow robe of the monk, so the Buddha taught, that his followers could overcome the clinging to existence, and so become Arahats and attain the Nirvana. There is no doubt that he obtained many adherents, for on the one hand, unlike the Brahmins, he refused to make his discovery the property of one caste only, and insisted that the burdensome ritual which they imposed was as nothing compared with inward purity of life and thought. Moreover, he taught not in the "Sanskrit," the holy language of the Brahmins, but in the "Prakrit,"<sup>1</sup> the more homely language of everyday life. So for forty years he went his way, till at last at the ripe age of eighty years he passed away about B.C. 480 at Kusinara on the borders of Nepaul. He went out, so the Burmese say, as a lamp goes out, when the oil is burnt up, and even the very wick is consumed.

Before passing on to the next section we must allude to one more element in Buddhist teaching, viz. the doctrine of *The Buddhas*. In the Buddhist Scriptures Gautama is represented as teaching that

<sup>1</sup> The Prakrit of the Deccan was known as Pali, see p. 1.

he is only one in a long series of "Awakened" Ones, who, at intervals of 5000 years, appear in the world to preach the doctrine of deliverance. The names of twenty-four such Buddhas have been handed down to us, four of them in the present world-cycle. Their names, according to the Burmese, are Gawnagong, Kawkathan, Kathapa, and Gautama. When 5000 years shall have elapsed from Gautama, a fifth will appear, Maitreya, the Buddha of kindness. Strange things are told about Maitreya, which suggest that the doctrine of the Buddhas, or this portion of it, has come into contact, sometime and somewhere, with Christianity. All the Buddhas are known by peculiar marks, and the marks of Maitreya are the wound-prints in his hands. Can we wonder then that many a missionary has made Maitreya his text, and won converts to Christ by declaring that Maitreya is already come, and that He may be known by those prints in the palms of His hands where the nails went through when He was crucified for men.

II. One often meets, even amongst devout and intelligent Christians, with the idea that there is a very striking similarity between the beliefs and practice of Buddhism and those of Christianity. The idea is largely due to familiarity with Sir Edwin Arnold's poem, "The Light of Asia," a very beautiful poem, but as a textbook of Buddhism utterly untrustworthy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of this subject, see the Author's "Buddhism" in the series "Non-Christian Religions," procurable from S.P.G., price 2d.



BURMESE MENDICANT IN HIS YELLOW ROBES,  
AND WITH THE BEADS WHICH HELP TO RIVET  
HIS ATTENTION ON THE THREE GEMS—THE  
BUDDHA, THE LAW, AND THE MONKHOOD



THE MAHABODHI AT PAGAN. A COPY OF THE TEMPLE AT BUDDHA-GAYA

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As a matter of fact Christianity and Buddhism are wide as the poles asunder, and for this reason, that they look at the world and life from entirely different standpoints. The Christian believes in God, the Buddhist ignores Him. It is true that the gods or Devas of India have found a place in Buddhism and figure in its literature, but to none of them can we ascribe the title of God in a Christian or theistic sense. They are merely beings of a higher order than man, subject to all men's faults and miseries, and as dependent as man for ultimate deliverance on following the Buddha's method.

"Never in the history of the world," says Professor Rhys Davids ("Sacred Books of the East," Vol. XI), "had a scheme of salvation been put forth so simple in its nature, so free from any superhuman agency, so independent of, so even antagonistic to, a belief in a soul, the belief in God, and of hope in a future life," and he adds, "We must not allow our estimate of the importance of the event to be influenced by our disagreement with the opinions put forth". He points out how much there is in common between the agnostic philosophers of India, the Stoics of Greece and Rome, and some of the most recent schools of thought in France, Germany, and England.

It is doubtless this ignoring of God which has recommended Buddhism to some Western minds. Certainly it is the point on which Europeans who have assumed the yellow robe in the East lay most stress. Here is what one of them says :—

The Buddha does not deny the gods; he has no reason for doing so; he merely ignores them, as indeed he could not help but do. From this point of view the only thing of interest is to find one's way out of the burning house of sentient life . . . the law of change is universal . . . it rules in the Heavens as well as upon the earth; and where-soever change is, there also is there suffering and sorrow.<sup>1</sup>

But you can't just ignore God and rule Him out of the universe. Either He exists and is everything, or He does not exist and is nothing; there is no intermediate phase of inaction or non-interference.

It follows therefore, as a matter of course, that both in its outlook on life and in its estimate of sin and morality Buddhism will differ from Christianity just as much as those who believe that the sun goes round the world will differ in their ideas of the physical universe from those who believe that the world goes round the sun.

Let us consider some of these differences.

1. *The conception of life.*—The Christian believes that the world is a school for the life that is to be. It has a purpose. "Our Lord," says Du Bose,<sup>2</sup> "took definite part with the West against the East in making the distinctive note of life not *apathia* but *energeia*. Thought, desire, will, were not to be abjured and disowned in despair through the overpowering sense of their futility. Life was not to be reduced to zero through their renunciation, but raised to infinity through their affirmation and satisfaction," and again,

<sup>1</sup> "Buddhism," No. 6. "Rangoon Magazine of the Buddhacassana Samagana."

<sup>2</sup> "The Gospel in the Gospels," p. 19.

"pleasure and happiness are not to be denied and mortified, but to be placed and found in the right objects".<sup>1</sup> But no one can study Buddhism without seeing how indifferent it is to life. There is no effort to find a reason for life; life is purposeless; it is only something to be escaped from.

2. *The existence of the soul*.—Christianity affirms a "soul"; Buddhism denies it. But in practice the Buddhist goes back on his negation. It is "too hard" for him. The Burman goes dutifully to the Pagoda, and ejaculates "Anicca, Dukka, Anatta," i.e. "impermanence, trouble, unsubstantiality (or 'no soul,' 'no ego')," but nevertheless, in his daily thoughts, he postulates a soul, or "butterfly," which, when he dies, departs to find some other bodily home, and they believe that the "Karma" of their action goes along with the soul, so that the next existence will be the existence of their own soul, and not merely the existence of some other being who merely inherits their Karma. So, too, in the Jataka, the "Birth Stories" of the Buddha, the popular tales which describe all the existences through which he passed before he achieved Buddhahood. It is everywhere taken for granted that it is the same personality which lives and loves, suffers and rejoices in the ancient tales.

3. *Sin*.—For the Christian "sin" is disobedience to a Heavenly Father, who has planned our happiness, and such disobedience is sure to bring suffering and misery. Buddhism is full of the "misery" which arises out of sin, but for the Buddhist sin cannot

<sup>1</sup> "The Gospel in the Gospels," p. 29.

be disobedience to a Heavenly Father, for he is unconscious of His existence. It is rather a mistake, which has ruinous consequences. If you find it difficult to perceive the difference, it is at once apparent when you begin to talk about "forgiveness". Christianity is the gospel of forgiveness. God forgives for Christ's sake, and the thought of that forgiveness heartens us to do better. But in Buddhism there is no forgiveness. Repent as you may, you have to work out your fault for untold years in hell. Once upon a time there was a King in Benares, Brahmadatta by name (he was really the Buddha in a former existence). One day his chariot wheels grated against the hut of a poor widow, and in his anger he had the hut destroyed. He repented, and made royal amends. But all the same he had to suffer 80,000 years in hell for that one fault. It is magnificent this contempt for a royal sinner, but the idea of the uselessness of repentance and impossibility of forgiveness is distinctive of Buddhism.

4. *Ethics*.—We shall often be faced with the argument that though Buddhist doctrine is widely divergent from the Christian, yet the character which Gautama set before his disciples is almost identical with that inculcated by the Christ. Superficially no doubt this is so. Gentleness, kindness, and purity should certainly be products of both religions.

But the question really is, which aims the higher and which has the nobler motive behind it, and which claims and actually possesses the greater power to lift man higher? As to this the Christian has little

doubt. The Christian motive is gratitude for all that God has done, is doing, and will do for him in creation, redemption, and sanctification, and the Christian power lies in union with Christ Himself by His Spirit, to lift us towards an ideal character supplied by Christ Himself. On the other hand what nobler motive has Buddhism ever supplied other than a desire to escape from the suffering of life and life itself? No doubt in the gentler virtues the good Buddhist often seems to approach the good Christian. But the Buddha's ideal is essentially monastic; he teaches men to get away from the world, its struggles, and responsibilities; and when Buddhist and Christian are brought up against the evil in the world, then at once the good Christian excels the good Buddhist, for the benevolence of the Buddhist, wishing everybody well, but keeping aloof from action, at once gives way before that active struggle with evil, which draws out in the Christian a stern endurance and resolve and a hatred of meanness which are altogether absent in the apathetic Buddhist. It is, however, impossible to discuss this subject here in any fulness, and we must direct our readers elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

These are some of the differences between Buddhism and Christianity, and the more closely we study Buddhism, the more we realize the gap between the two. For, let it be repeated, Buddhism and Christianity approach life from two entirely different stand-points. The Buddha ignores God, and points each man for deliverance to the man himself.

<sup>1</sup> See "Buddhism," pp. 14-16—the pamphlet alluded to above.

Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to anyone besides yourselves.

Christ came that we might have life and that more abundantly. The Buddha bade men seek deliverance from life itself.

It is a common course with European Buddhists to stigmatize Christianity as ego-centric, meaning that Christian life all revolves round "self". Of course bad Christians, and bad Buddhists too, are selfish, but it would be more correct to speak of Christianity as "Theo-centric," i.e. centring round God. It is Buddhism, which ignores God and points man, for deliverance, to himself alone, and makes all ethics but an exercise in the acquiring of merit, which is really "ego-centric".

III. There were other teachers and other sects, in the India of those days, seeking enlightenment, and establishing their doctrines by much the same means which Gautama tried. Such a teacher, such a system was that of Nātaputta, the founder of the Jains, who still flourish in India; and for two centuries it does not appear that Buddhism obtained any great predominance. Then, about 260 B.C., it conquered the heart of the great Asoka, third of the Mauryan dynasty, which rose to power after the invasion of Alexander. He was a man of low "caste," and Buddhism, with its contempt for caste, appealed to him. Under his patronage it became the dominant religion of his Indian

Empire, and "the yellow robes shone over the land".

From a council held at Patna, Buddhist missionaries are said to have been sent to many lands, Asoka's own son Mahinda to Ceylon, and Sona and Uttara to Suvarna-Bhumi. The relics of one of these missionaries, Majjhima, who was sent to the central Himalaya, have been found under the Sanchi Tope, a Pagoda in Central India, and bear witness to the general fact of these missionary journeys.

The mission to Ceylon had important results for Buddhism. So far, it would appear, the teachings of the Buddha had not been written down. The memory was regarded as the more reliable vehicle. But in the last century B.C., the doctrine was at last committed to writing, in Pali, which would seem to have been the Prakrit of the Deccan. It is in the Pali "Tri-pitaka" (or "three baskets" of the Law), the Buddhist "Bible," that the Buddhist doctrine has been preserved to us in its purest form.

Meanwhile in the far north of India a new and corrupt school of Buddhism was arising. In the time of Kanishka, a Scythian king in the Indus valley, and in the first century A.D. a fourth Buddhist Council was held. It published commentaries, and if it had also decided to commit the Buddhist doctrines to writing, the Buddhism of the North might have remained as pure as the Buddhism of the South. But it did not, and as a result Buddhism broke asunder into two great schools which are known as the Northern and Southern Buddhism. The Buddhism of Asoka's day,

the Buddhism of the Pali Pitakas, which scholars regard as the most authentic chronicle of the history and doctrines of Buddhism, was gradually confined to the monasteries of Ceylon. To it the Northern Buddhists gave the name of the "Hinayana" or the "Lesser Vehicle". For themselves they arrogated the name of the "Mahayana" or the "Greater Vehicle".

A good deal of mystery surrounds the origin of this Mahayanist Buddhism. Its literature is written not in Pali but in Sanscrit, and is widely different in contents and character from that of the Southern Buddhists. Its ideals, too, are different. With the Southern Buddhists it is "Arahatship," and the attainment of Nirvana by each individual follower of the Buddha, but with the Northern Buddhists the ideal is to become a "Bodhisatva" or "Embryo Buddha," and so live on from age to age in a suffering world and help mankind. It is this Northern Buddhism, with its corrupt and yet warmer ideal, which has made the greatest conquests and overflowed into China, Tibet, Corea, and Japan. And it made these conquests largely because it frankly cast aside the atheism of Buddhism. In it the Buddha himself has, to all intents and purposes, become Divine, and in China is worshipped as Kwan-Yin, Goddess of Mercy, or in Japan as Amitabha Buddha, who sits eternally enthroned in heaven, and emanating from whom the Buddhas appear from time to time on earth.

Except in Ceylon, which remained conservatively Hinayanist, and from which the true doctrine emerged centuries later to re-convert the lands of the Indo-



Chinese peninsula, the Buddhists of India gradually accepted the Northern Buddhism. But not for long. Buddhism itself soon began to wane, and the influence of the Brahmins revived, and the Mohammedan conquest of the eleventh and twelfth centuries finally extinguished it. To-day there are, outside Ceylon and Burma, only 250,000 Buddhists in the Indian Empire. Why did it fail? Cannot it be said that it was because it did not satisfy the Indian mind, which, through whatever forms of horror, has ever been searching after God. Of what other religion can it be said that it has been tried by a great land like India and deliberately cast aside?

But we must turn to Burma and learn first how the Northern Buddhism reached it, only to be supplanted by the purer doctrines of the Hinayana, and then inquire whether in any true sense it has really elevated Burmese life and history, or brought what it promises—"Deliverance".

## CHAPTER V.

### LORDS OF THE WHITE ELEPHANT.

BURMESE History is a puzzle, a sort of larger edition of that series of sanguinary scuffles in English History which we call the Heptarchy. It is, more or less, the story of the feuds of the Burmese and Môn, which are only settled by the final victory of the former under Alaungpaya in 1757, and the founding of the city of Rangoon to commemorate what its name implies, "the end of the war". Another century and Burma passes into the hands of the English. Under the Pax Britannica the Môn may yet revive—their language, proscribed by Alaungpaya, has already a little revived—not, we hope, again to take up the quarrel with the Burmese, but to find a place and work side by side with them in the larger unity of the British Empire, and—is it a dream?—in the catholic Church of Christ.

To assist the memory we will divide the story into four divisions. Two we will call "The Legendary" and "The Historical," though in Burmese History it is hard to say where the legendary ends or the historical begins. And each will have something of a similar ending; the legendary will lead up to

Anawrata and the rise of the first Burmese Empire at Pagan c. A.D. 1050; the historical will lead up to Alaungpaya c. 1750 and the rise of the second Burmese Empire at Ava and Mandalay. The whole will conclude with the wars of the British annexation.

# I. LEGENDARY, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1050.

1. Down on the southern coasts the *Môn* were emerging from barbarism under the tutelage of Indian immigrants. It was a very different southern coast from that which our maps show us to-day. The Irrawaddy flowed out to sea not by a delta but by an estuary, studded perhaps with islands. Rangoon, Pegu, and Moulmein did not yet exist, and the sea swept in, where they stand to-day, on a curving coast broken with estuaries and islands.

To this broken coast came the Indian settlers, to trade and fight, as early as 600-500 B.C. One of the first Indian colonies would seem to have been Gaudas or Golas, who settled at Gola-Nagara, the modern Kula-taik (i.e. Indian settlement), some miles north of Thaton, and from them the name Kula has come to be applied to all foreigners. But, for the most part, the colonists were Dravidians from Telingana, the country of the Telugu, at the mouths of the Kistna and Godaveri, and from their Indian home has come the racial name which still clings to the people of the coast-lands, "Talaing". To the more cultured man from India the native *Môn* were but

savages. They called them "Nagas," i.e. Dragons or Ogres.<sup>1</sup> But the legends tell how the conquering Indian was himself conquered by the Naga-ma, or Ogress, and the result was a mixed people, Môn-Talaing, more Môn than Talaing, certainly Mongolian in form and feature, but owing much of their "culture" to the man from India. The coast-land became dotted with Indian place names, two of which stand out conspicuous, Suvarna-Bhumi or, as the Môn called it, Thaton, founded, says legend, as long ago as 500 B.C., and Hamsavati, Hanthawaddy, or Pegu, founded a thousand years later when the sea was already receding from Thaton.

The Môn were animists, the Indian immigrants Hindus. But Buddhism was stirring in India, and by and by came the Buddhist teachers. The great Buddhist Chronicle of Ceylon claims that from the first great Council at Patna in 242 B.C. two missionaries, Sona and Uttara, were sent to Suvarna-Bhumi. It is much more likely, however, that Buddhism came a few centuries later from the land of the Indian immigrants, Telingana, where some of the most remarkable of early Buddhist remains are to be found. From this Indian land too came the alphabet which is known as Talaing, and was later

<sup>1</sup>In the Pitt Rivers Museum at Farnham, Dorset, are some bas-reliefs brought years ago from the base of a Pagoda at Thaton. They show how these "ogres" appeared to the Indian eye. Hideous, and yet, behind the caricature, anyone acquainted with Burma can catch the form and features of the attractive Burman of to-day.

adopted by the Burmese, and from there too came the men who built in Burma the many-terraced temples of Dravidian type, first at Thaton, and afterwards at Pagan.

Legends also claim that one of the greatest of Buddhist teachers, Buddha-ghosa, who had studied and written in Ceylon, preached throughout the Môn coast-lands about A.D. 400. But the story is improbable. Some famous inscriptions, the Kalyani stones at Pegu, which tell the story of Buddhism in Burma as it was known four centuries ago, contain no record of him. Even the very existence of Budda-ghosa has been questioned, and, so far as Burma is concerned, his name "The Voice of Buddha" is rather suggestive that he is but the impersonation in legend of the new teaching that was sweeping through the land. At all events "Buddha-ghosa" was the champion of the Southern Buddhism, the purer teaching of Ceylon, and that which came to Thaton was certainly the more corrupt "Northern" Buddhism which then held sway in India.

The whole subject of Buddhist origins is fraught with difficulty. History and legend get easily blended, and the similarity of place names leads to the transference of whole masses of legend. It is as if all the ancient legends surrounding Perth, in Scotland, were taken and woven into the history of the modern Perth in W. Australia.

Let us take one illustration. The Buddhist Scriptures tell how, when Gautama had attained Buddhahood under the Bo-Tree, among the first to

minister to him were two merchants from Utkaladesa (i.e. "Orissa" in W. Bengal). A colony from Orissa came and settled not far from where Rangoon now stands, and the neighbourhood became known also as Utkaladesa. So the Talaings concluded that the merchants came from their own land, and, returning home, buried eight hairs from Gautama's head on the Singuttura hill, and made the first beginnings of the Shwé Dagôn, the great pagoda of Rangoon. So legends grow, and origins are confused.

Still we can be sure of this. In A.D. 1050 a king reigned in Thaton, Môn by race, Indian in civilization, Buddhist in religion, and Manuha by name.

2. Meanwhile, what of the *Burmese*? If it is hard to follow the history of the Môn, it is harder still to unravel the tangled threads of Burmese legend before the coming of Anawrata. The legends cling to three "Capitals," Tagaung or old Pagan, 150 miles north of Mandalay, where mythical kings began to reign ages before the Christian era; Tharé-Kettara, a few miles east of Prome, where Duttabaung, one of the great figures of Burmese legend, built a city about 400 B.C., and, last and greatest, Pagan, the city of Anawrata, 100 miles below Mandalay on the great bend where the Irrawaddy turns from west to south. It is a story of continual fighting, and the foundation of Pagan is ascribed to the leader of the Pyu, a Burmese tribe which had been involved in civil war with its fellow-tribes. Some day it is to be hoped that the archaeologists will get to work in the jungle-covered ruins of Tharé-Kettara and Tagaung, and amongst

the broken bricks of Pagan, and then we shall know a little more about these tribes and may get answers to certain questions which as yet seem insoluble. Did the Burmese come from the southern slopes of the Himalaya, and what of their half-mythical kings? Legend says they came from North-East India. Were they Mongolian, or Aryan rulers of a Mongolian people? Did they cross the hills from Manipur or Assam, or did they come up the Irrawaddy? How soon did the Burmese become Buddhists? And did Buddhism filter through the tangled hills and forests from Assam or China, or, as seems more likely, did it come from the same Dravidian lands as it did to the Môn? "Where doctors differ" who is to decide?

Mr. C. H. Parker, who has searched the Chinese records for mention of the Burmese, gives us the following passage out of the T'ang history of the Southern Barbarians. It refers to the ninth century, and we should like to think that it refers to the mysterious Pyu who loom through the mists of early Burmese legend, and are said to have been the founders of Pagan.

When the King of the P'iao goes out in his palanquin he reposes on a couch of golden cord; but for long distances he rides on an elephant. He has several hundred female attendants. The circular wall of his city is built of greenish glazed tiles, and is 160 li [over 50 miles] in circuit. It has twelve gates, and there are pagodas at each of the four corners. The people all live inside it. . . . They dislike taking life. They greet each other by embracing the arm with the hand. They know how to make astronomical

calculations, and are devotees of Buddhism. They have a hundred monasteries, with bricks of vitreous ware, embellished with gold and silver, vermilion, gay colours, and red kink. The floor is painted and covered with gay carpets. The King's residence is in like style. The people cut their hair at eight years of age, and enter a monastery. If at the age of twenty they have not grasped the doctrine, they become lay people again. For clothes they use a cotton sarong. . . . In the King's palace there are placed two bells, one of gold and one of silver; when an enemy comes they burn incense, and beat the bells in order to divine their good or evil fortune. There is a huge white elephant 100 feet high; litigants burn incense, and kneel before the elephant, reflecting within themselves whether they are right or wrong, after which they retire. When there is any disaster or plague the King also kneels down in front of the elephant, and blames himself. . . . The land is suitable for pulse, rice, and the millet-like grains. Sugar cane grows as thick as a man's shin. There is no hemp or wheat. . . . Near the city there are hills of sand, and a barren waste, which . . . is twenty days from the city of Si-shê-li [Central India]."

If this is "Pagan," it would certainly seem to settle one vexed question. Were there Buddhists before Anawrata? But apart from it a good deal of evidence seems to be forthcoming to show that there were. King Thenga Yaza of Pagan, who established the Burmese era in A.D. 639, had been a monk, and some of the pagodas of Anawrata's time appear to have been built over or above smaller buildings of an older type. The Buddhism which Anawrata introduced was not a new faith, but an old one which had not yet taken firm hold upon the people, and from which they had apostatized.





RUINS OF THE ONLY REMAINING CITY GATE AT PAGAN



THE ANANDA PAGODA AT PAGAN, BUILT BY KING KYANSITHA, A.D. 1058  
(See p. 67)



## II. ANAWRATA AND THE FIRST BURMESE EMPIRE, A.D. 1010 TO 1287.

Anawrata reigned from about 1010 to 1050. He is the first really historical national hero of Burma, the Constantine of Buddhism in Burma, as Asoka was in India. Serpent worship had taken the place of the older Buddhism of Pagan, but a missionary came and preached the Buddhist Law, and Anawrata set himself to restore it. He sent messengers to Manuha, King of Thaton, to ask for monks and scriptures. But the missionary enthusiasm of Buddhism had died away, and Manuha refused. Then came Anawrata with an army, and, destroying Thaton, carried off king and monks, artificers and people, images and books (three elephant loads of books), and used them to populate and adorn his great city on the Irrawaddy. Such is the story. The great temples of Pagan still remain to attest its truth, and one of the most curious is the Nanpaya, with its Dravidian *sikra* or spire, which tradition asserts to have been the prison palace of Manuha, the captive architect and king. There is only one difficulty, viz., the poverty of the ruins at Thaton. The walls enclose a large enough area, but the terraced temples hardly suggest the greater buildings on the Irrawaddy. It has been suggested that it was not Thaton, but Angkor in Cambodia, the capital not of the Môn but of the kindred Hkmers, which Anawrata destroyed, but it is a question for archæology to settle. And we must remember that Thaton is in the rainiest part of Burma, where the

jungle growth soon undoes the work of man. It is only the fact that Pagan is in the dry zone that has preserved for us its treasures.

*The first Burmese Empire* lasted for 250 years from the time of Anawrata to 1287. It is probable that the earlier kings held sway over the whole tract of what is known as British Burma. It is a story of kings and pagodas and alliances in marriage and religion with Behar, the Holy Land of Buddhism. The ruins tell the tale. They extend for 8 miles along the river and from 2 to 4 miles inland. The walls of the city are still traceable, lying four square, each side a mile, and of the twelve gates one still in part remains. But palaces and houses are gone, for they were built of wood and bamboo. Only the pagodas survive, two of the giants, the Thapinyu and Gawdapalin within the city walls, but the majority, as at Pegu or Mandalay, outside. The Burmese say there are 9999. Certainly there are 1000, monsters 180 to 210 feet high, and humbler ones of as many inches, and you walk for miles on ground feet deep in broken brick.

The ordinary pagoda in Burma to-day is bell-shaped and solid, and represents a development of the rounded Topes of India, and of the Turanian barrow. It covers a chamber where some relic of the Buddha or of some Buddhist saint is hidden. But the great pagodas of Pagan are in great part hollow, and contain chambers for giant images and long corridors. They are more like temples, shapely renderings in brick of the sacred Buddhist caves of India.

Of all the temples of Pagan, the Ananda, built by the son of Anawrata in 1058, is the most perfect and the most beautiful. In shape it is a square of 200 feet to the side, but from each side projects a long gabled porch, thus converting the plan into a perfect Greek cross. Each of the porches leads by a long vestibule to the very centre of the building, where, in four separate cells 50 feet high, stand four great 30 feet images of wood, the four Buddhas, who at intervals of 5000 years, Gautama the last, have appeared during the present world dispensation. They stand, on carved lotus pedestals, to teach, and in the gloom of the vault a weird light falls on the face and head through apertures in the roof above. Cutting the four porches or vestibules at right angles are two lofty corridors, an inner and an outer, which run all round the building. Along the corridors in niches are carved representations of the many lives through which Gautama passed before he attained to Buddhahood. Outside, the temple springs from the ground 25 feet in two stories with arched windows. Above this rise six successively diminishing terraces, connected by curved converging roofs, while on the last terrace stands the Sikra, the mitre-shaped spire of Dravidian India, and the whole is capped with moulded taper pinnacle and gilded "hti" or umbrella like the bell-shaped pagodas of to-day. The height is 168 feet. The material is brick covered with stucco, in which the mouldings and ornamentation are formed. There is no doubt as to the Indian origin of those who wrought it, but the mystery remains, for here we find

pointed arches and groined roofs, though until the time of Akbar in the sixteenth century no one learnt to build a true arch in India. Yet here in Burma, a century and a half before the pointed style was developed in England, we find these temples building. Says Colonel Yule, who, in his mission to Ava in 1855, first brought them to the notice of the world, "it excites wonder, almost awe".

Pagan is an epitome of Buddhism. To wander amongst its ruins is a liberal education. You see the four Buddhas of the past, Kawkathan, Gawnagong, Kathapa, and Gautama who have discovered for men the way of deliverance from the woes of life. Everywhere, in the corridors of the larger temples, or at the base of smaller pagodas, you can follow in bas-relief or carved representation the 550 lives, through which the Sakyan Gautama passed ere he too found enlightenment, and became a Buddha. The "Mahabodhi," built in 1219, is a copy of the more famous temple at Buddha-Gaya in India on the site of the famous Bo-Tree. The "Upali Thein," with its frescoed walls, tells of the Môn monk Chapada who in the twelfth century came to Pagan bringing the purer doctrines of Ceylon, the Southern Buddhism of the Hinayana, which was to expel from Burma the corrupt teaching of the Northern Mahayana. To the north-east of Pagan, in its savage glen, are the frowning walls of the Kyaukku-Ohnmin, with its strange mixture of Buddhist and Hindu sculptures, where the champions of the Northern Buddhism retired and waged wordy warfare with the followers of Chapada, as long as

Pagan lasted. And yet, while the Buddha is everywhere, everywhere too is the reminder of an older and still persistent faith. Under the very shadow of one of the pagodas, Anawrata's first, on the bold bluff where the great river turns south, lurk the rude images of the thirty-seven Nats, or Hero-Spirits, of Burma which Buddhism displaced from honour, but could never supersede.

The first Burmese Empire came to an end in 1287, when the armies of Kublai Khan, which had just broken the Shan power in Yunnan, invaded Burma. Marco Polo was with them and has told us how the King of Burma was building a "Golden Tower". It is unlikely that the Chinese ever got to Pagan, or further than 100 miles south of Bhamo. But the Burmese armies melted away, and Pagan was sacked, either by a rebellious soldiery or allied Shans. The King fled, and has gone down to history as "the King who ran away from the Chinese". So now Pagan lies in ruins between the river and the waste, while behind it rise scorched hills and the dead volcanic cone of Popa, as if to frame its desolation.

### III. HISTORICAL, A.D. 1287 to 1750.

There follows an era of confusion. The Chinese invasion had driven masses of Shans before it. Their eastern hills no longer sufficed, and they overflowed into the plains of Burma. So the age-long conflict of Burmese and Môn is henceforth complicated by the alternate conflict and alliance of both with Shans.

1. When the mist clears again, we find political interest changing to new centres. The great bend at the twenty-second parallel, where the Irrawaddy turns west, henceforward is always to be the site of a capital. Here Shans reigned at Sagaing, and later a Shan-Burmese king fixed his capital at Ava. In the south, Shan-Talaing kings made Pegu their capital, and so, amidst constant war, the balance of power sways from side to side for 200 years.

To the close of the fifteenth century belongs Dhammaceti, first of the really famous kings of Pegu. He had been a monk, and was anxious that the Buddhism of Burma should be kept pure according to the teaching of the Ceylon school. Two Môn monks were accordingly sent to the "Great Monastery" in Ceylon, where the spiritual successors of Mahinda, Asoka's son, abode, for re-ordination. They returned, and outside Pegu consecrated the Kalyani-Sima, an ordination hall, where ten great slabs in Pali and Talaing record the early story of Buddhism in Burma, and the efforts of Dhammaceti to keep the succession pure. To Dhammaceti, and the kings who ruled after him, must be ascribed the antiquities which make Pegu famous, the four great Buddhas, 90 feet high which sit back to back, and stare out over the forest, the colossal recumbent Buddha, 181 feet long, and the great pagoda, the Môn rival to the great Shwé Dagôn of Rangoon.

2. Meanwhile a new Burmese power had arisen at Toungoo, 100 miles north of Pegu, and during the sixteenth century two kings, Tabinshwéti and his



brother-in-law and successor Buyinnaung (styled Branginoco by the Portuguese) carried their arms through the length and breadth of Burma, and built up a short-lived Empire, more extensive even than that of Pagan. Of its magnificence the Venetian traveller Caesar Fredericke says, "The King of Pegu" (for these Toungoo kings subdued Pegu and made it their capital) "for people, dominions, gold, and silver far exceeds the power of the great Turk in treasure and strength". We now begin to hear of Europeans, Portuguese traders from Goa, Portuguese artillery, fighting now for, now against, these Burmese kings. But this middle Burmese Empire, if so we may style it, went to pieces. The capital was transferred to Ava, and throughout Burma confusion reigned once more. Ralph Fitch, the first English trader in Burma, speaks of the streets of Pegu in 1586 as "the fairest I ever saw," but the Jesuit Boves, in 1600, found it all in ruins. The great banks of the crumbled walls, one and a half miles each way, still remain, and on them stand the bungalows of the English Government officials.

3. The next century and a half, 1600 to 1750, is a welter of bloodshed.

The story of *Philip de Brito*, 1603 to 1613, is typical of the time. He was a Portuguese adventurer, who, under a king of Arakan, became Governor of Syriam, on the shore opposite to where Rangoon now stands, and its predecessor as the resort of European traders. He revolted and, assisted from Goa, declared himself King of the Môn or Talaings. He built a church, the

ruins of which may still be seen, and might have fared well. But he destroyed pagodas, and forced Christianity on the people, and, when the King of Ava came against him, a Talaing opened the gates and de Brito was impaled. The Portuguese inhabitants were taken to Ava, where Roman Catholic missionaries were allowed free access to them, and their descendants still constitute the bulk of the Christian population round Mandalay. Two hundred years later they were serving as gunners in Burmese armies.

Amid the confusion European traders were coming and going, Portuguese at Martaban and Syriam, the Dutch on the island at Cape Negrais, and at Bhamo. The East India Company established factories at Syriam, Prome, Ava and Bhamo. Now and again they got mixed up in the confusions of the time, and about 1650 were expelled. Dutch and Portuguese never came back, but French and English were at Syriam again before the close of the century, and the English at Negrais and Bassein.

About 1740, assisted by a tribe of Shans, the *Môn* made their last bid for supremacy. Under Shan kings they ravaged Burma to the walls of Ava, took it and burnt it, and carried off to Pegu the last of the Burmese kings of the Toungoo line. But the *Môn* triumph was short-lived. The Burmese found a new leader in Alaungpaya. In 1756 Syriam and Pegu were taken and destroyed, and *Môn* dominion came to an end.

#### IV. ALAUNGPAYA AND THE SECOND BURMESE EMPIRE, 1756 to 1885.

Just as the first and legendary period of Burma's history leads up to Anawrata, so the second or historical period issues in Alaungpaya.

*Alaungpaya* was a man of the people, headman of Mokso-bo, "the hunters' village". We call it "Shwebo". When Upper Burma seemed passing at last beneath the heel of the Môn, this village headman disdained to yield, refused taxes, and raised revolt. His auspicious name Aung Zeya or "conquering victor" inspired confidence. He assumed the greater title of Alaungpaya, "the Incarnation of a Buddha," and in four years had riveted the Burmese yoke once more upon the Môn, destroyed their power, and proscribed their language. Pegu sank to the rank of a "district" town, and Rangoon, "end of the war," was founded under the shadow of the Shwé Dagôn, to take its place.

1. Alaungpaya reigned only seven years, but in that time he carried his arms from Manipur on the north-west to Siam in the south-east, and he died laying siege to Ayuthia, its capital. He was a competent ruler and a just administrator, and his death was perhaps for Burma a misfortune.

Ten kings of his line succeeded him. Alaungpaya had made his capital at Shwebo, but his successors moved to the head of the Irrawaddy at Sagaing and Ava. Sinbyushin, "Lord of the White Elephant," made his capital at the latter, but Bodawpaya built

"Amarapoora," and Mindohn Min, "Mandalay". They can all be seen, these capitals, within a short journey of Mandalay, and all reproduce the traditional features of such cities—the walls lying four square—the twelve gates—and the palace a stockaded fortress at the centre of the town. All except Mandalay are now deserted, and only the pagodas left to tell of former grandeur.

Sinbyushin destroyed and carried into captivity the royal family of Siam, but he could not destroy the country's independence which took a new lease under the present line at Bangkok. He also raised the Shwé Dagôn to its present height, and celebrated the event by the execution of Binya Dala, the captive Talaing king. Two successors died in palace plots and then Bodawpaya, third son of Alaungpaya, seized the throne. He was last of the Burmese conquerors, and succeeded in adding Arakan to his dominions, and interfering in Manipur and Assam. But they were dangerous exploits, for Burma at last came face to face with the British Raj. For the rest, Bodawpaya was a blood-thirsty tyrant, shedding even more blood at home than in his continual wars, and seeking to atone by works of merit. He built the Mingohn Pagoda on the river above Mandalay, which even in its unfinished state is the largest mass of brick-work in the world, and brought a famous image of the Buddha from Arakan, and installed it outside his capital in the Arakan Pagoda.

2. The conquests of Bodawpaya brought Burma into touch with British India and frontier troubles led,

in the reign of his successor Bagyidaw, to the *First Burmese War*, 1824 to 1826. The British occupied Arakan, but could not cross the hills, but a force under Sir Archibald Campbell seized Rangoon, took Donabyu on the Irrawaddy, where the only Burmese general of note, Maha Bandula, was killed, and advanced up the river to Yandabu, within 45 miles of Ava. By the Treaty of Yandabu, February, 1826, Assam, Arakan and the Coasts of Tenasserim, east of the Salween, were ceded to Britain. Bagyidaw went mad, as did also his brother and successor Tharrawadi. The *Second Burmese War*, 1852 to 1853, belongs to the reign of Pagan Min, Tharrawadi's son. Interference with English mariners, and an overweening confidence on the part of the Burmese were the cause. General Godwin attacked Rangoon, and heavy fighting took place round the Shwé Dagón at Rangoon, and the great pagoda at Pegu, and at the latter the English received help from the Talaings. Lord Dalhousie arrived during the course of operations, and after the British forces had advanced beyond Prome the whole of what we now know as Lower Burma was formally annexed. There was no actual treaty, but Pagan Min meanwhile had been deposed, and his successor, Mindohn Min, tacitly accepted the boundary fixed by the British at latitude  $19^{\circ} 29' 3''$ .

Mindohn Min remained on good terms with the British, and built and moved to Mandalay in 1857. He was a good if somewhat extravagant king, a devout Buddhist, and the constructor of most of the pagodas and monasteries around Mandalay. Like all

Buddhists he was as a rule tolerant, and the story of how he built a church, and schools and clergy house for the S.P.G. in Mandalay is well known. He died in 1878. He was succeeded by Thibaw Min, and at the close of 1885 this last Burmese king was on his way to Ratnagiri near Bombay, a prisoner and dethroned. He was a weak man, the tool of one of his wives, Supayalat, and of her unscrupulous mother. By their intrigues he came to the throne, and at their advice proceeded to strengthen his position by the wholesale slaughter of his royal kindred. The British Government broke off relations with the tyrant, and, when interference with English subjects followed, the *Third Burmese War* began. General Prendergast crossed the frontier in November, 1885, and a fortnight later entered Mandalay. There was but little fighting and on 1 January, 1886, the whole of Upper Burma was formally annexed. Thebaw's armies broke up into bands of Dacoits, and it was only in 1889, after years of patient and uphill work, not only by the troops, but by civil officers and police, that the country was finally pacified.

Burmese history is interesting for two reasons. It is a background against which we can study the introduction of Buddhism into Burma. It is also the history of a professedly Buddhist kingdom, and, therefore, we can ask whether Buddhism has profoundly influenced it. The first subject is not very easy, but it is not so difficult as the second.

Burmese history never seems to grow up; it is a

story of kings and pagodas, war and bloodshed, with spasmodic efforts to atone by the erection of religious buildings, a perpetual "Middle Ages," without those nobler impulses, which swept over and lifted the heart of Mediæval Europe.

That most sympathetic delineator of Burma and the Burmese, Shway Yoe,<sup>1</sup> lays a great deal of the fault at the door of the "Maha-yaza-win," the great chronicle of the kings. "If the nation," he says, "which has no history is happy, it is difficult to know what is to be said of the nation which has a very voluminous history, almost all of which is, however, pure romance." In the Maha-yaza-win "no defeats are recorded; reverses are charmed into acts of clemency". He gives one pertinent illustration. The result of the First Burmese War, when Britain wrested the coast provinces away from Burma, is thus summed up in the Maha-yaza-win:—

The white strangers from the west fastened a quarrel upon the Lord of the Golden Palace. They landed at Rangoon, took that place, and Prome, and were permitted to advance as far as Yandabu; for the king, from motives of piety and regard to life, made no effort to oppose them. The strangers had spent vast sums of money on the enterprise and by the time they reached Yandabu, their resources were exhausted; and they were in great distress. They petitioned the King, who, in his clemency and generosity, sent them large sums of money to pay their expenses back, and ordered them out of the country.

The effect on the Burmese of such a rendering of history, Shway Yoe goes on to say, has been "most

<sup>1</sup> "The Burman: His Life and Notions," chap. XLVI.

undesirable". Certainly it has given a very perverted ideal of what a king ought to be. The national heroes are Anawrata, Tabinshweti, and Alaungpaya. The first named is certainly an attractive figure, though he stands too much on the borderland between legend and history to be a "character," but Tabinshweti and Alaungpaya are simply the swaggering and boastful Burman writ large. We cannot help loving the Burman, and smiling at his swagger, but even those who like him best have been the first to own, that when given a bigger stage of action, he has always shown himself a sad bully of his own folk and of the weaker peoples around him; the history and legends of Chins and Karens are one long story of oppression.

But is it all due to the influence of the Maha-yaza-win? And why has the Maha-yaza-win always remained in its infancy of romance and never grown up? Why has Buddhism never taught it a better theory of history and kingship? Mr. Fielding Hall,<sup>1</sup> another sympathetic writer on Burma, helps us, though perhaps unconsciously, to an answer. Speaking of Burmese "Government" he says that the only things worth noting about it were "its exceeding badness, and its disconnection with religion". While not defending the former, he seems to think that the latter was a beneficial feature. Religion has to do with a man's own soul; "beyond all this turmoil and fret there is the great Peace . . . and to reach it you must fit yourself for it. The monk is he who is attempting to reach it, and he knows that he cannot do

<sup>1</sup> "The Soul of a People," chap. vii.



that by attempting to rule his fellow-man; that is probably the very worst thing he could do. And therefore the monkhood, powerful as they were, left all politics alone." We might rejoin that there is another way of influencing history and kings than by interfering with politics or grasping at secular power, and that is by holding out a nobler idea of government and kingship, and by reminding rulers that the power of kings is "from above" (St. John XIX. 11) and that "the powers that be are ordained of God," and that they are "ministers of God for good" (Rom. XIII. 1-4). But this is just where Buddhism reveals its impotence, for it has nothing to say about God, or purpose in the world, or of a ministry of kings or nations. Its ideal is essentially monastic. It does not teach men, whether kings or humbler men, to live in the world and make it better than it is, but to think only of their own individual salvation, and in the seeking of it to separate from the world. One of the best of the kings was Dhammaceti of Pegu who left the monastery to assume the kingship and is largely responsible for the introduction of the purer Buddhism of Ceylon into Burma, and yet he was going counter to the dictates of his religion, which asserts that salvation is only attainable by the monk.

It is not without significance that the Buddhist monkhood had nothing to do with the ceremonies by which each king succeeded to the throne. There was no crowning, no anointing. What had to be done was done by Brahmin astrologers, the monkhood had no hand in it. The king went his way, the monk

went his, and if the king desired salvation, he knew how he could win it, not by the wise discharge of the kingly office (though that might win him a rather higher place in the next stage of this unhappy existence amongst Nats and Devas) but by abdicating and returning to the monastery. Such a religion may produce good monks ; it cannot produce great kings or a great history.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GAUTAMA OR MIN MAGARI.

BUDDHISM can hardly be said to have enabled the Burman to achieve a great history. But how does it affect his home and village life? He is proud of being a Buddhist. But does it satisfy his highest religious aspirations?

I. As to the penetration of Burmese village life by that of the monastery there can be no doubt, or that the penetration has made it kindlier and more cultured and humane. On the outskirts of every village, away from its clatter and din, and in a great court full of shady and flowering trees, mangoes, palmyra, and cocoanut palms, stands the Monastery or *Kyaung*. The buildings vary in number and size according to the wealth of the village or the *Kyaung-taga*, or founder. But in every monastery there will be the following group of buildings. A large one-storied hall, generally built of teak wood, and oblong like the village houses, and raised like them above the ground, with a verandah running round the outside. The roof rises in three or more tiers, and gables and eaves are richly carved, for it is in the free bold carving of their monasteries that the Burmese have won their fame as craftsmen. At one end of the hall is a dais where

the monks sit and receive visitors, and at the back sundry images of Gautama, and the *sadeik* or book chest in which are such sacred scriptures as the monks possess. Perhaps, though not always, there is a separate building for a dormitory. And there will be a "*thein*," a small building set apart for various rites, such as the examination and ordination of candidates for the monkhood, and a *tasung*, with a great image of the Buddha. Wherever the greatest images are, there will be the *pyathat*, the royal seven-tiered roof, finishing with a spire, which, seen over the trees, proclaims the presence of the haunt of ancient peace to the world around. And within the compound, and without, will be the white *pagodas*, and the *sayats* or rest houses, large open wooden shelters where the people can rest when they come on "Duty-days" to visit the monastery and worship at the pagodas. The latter are usually the white-washed, bell-shaped brick structures which have developed out of the barrow, the burial mound of the Turanian peoples. A favoured few are supposed to cover relics of the Buddha; the majority have to content themselves with models of the same, but all have some history "racy of the soil".

At the age of eight every boy goes to the monastery to school, and there, crouching on the ground before a monk, and with a tiny little blackboard in his hands, learns his letters and a little arithmetic, and the five universal commandments,<sup>1</sup> and the Pali formulæ to be used at worship, the reverence which he owes to the monks, and the duties he will have to perform when

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

he returns as a novice, and many other things. All is taught and learnt by shouting in unison, and the deafening noise of a monastery school at work has sometimes deceived the more discipline-loving European as to its thoroughness. Few boys, however, leave the monastery school without a knowledge of how to read and write, and the rudiments of Buddhist learning, and a reverence for authority. It is the monastery school which is the stronghold of Buddhism, and which has made the Burmese, for we know not how many centuries, and as far as the men are concerned, a nation of literates.

Back to the monastery goes the boy at fourteen years of age, and becomes a novice. He has, perhaps, been your Loo-galay or boy or servant, journeying with and waiting on you. One day he asks you for a fortnight's leave on "urgent private affairs" and disappears. Back he comes in a fortnight with his head shaven close, and the picturesque tuft on the top of his head gone, but in the meantime he has passed through the novitiate. He has undergone what may be described as his Buddhist baptism, received a new "Pali" name, though he does not use it, and become a "man". Hitherto he has been living but an animal life; now he can begin to accumulate "merit," and start on the road to Nirvana.

The day when he becomes a Shin or novice is the great day of a Burman's youth. Legend tells how Prince Theidat, i.e. Siddhartha or Gautama, the day before he abandoned his home, drove in triumph through his father's capital. So little Po Yon, or

whatever his name may be, goes in triumph round his native village; "the singers go before, the minstrels follow after," and dressed in his best he rides or drives surrounded by dancing companions, and goes the round of his friends and relations, taking leave as it were of the world. At his home there is high festival; the monks from the neighbouring Kyaung have come, and after the usual presents have been made to them, and Po Yon has professed his desire to be enrolled as a novice, his head is shaved, and he is clothed in the yellow robes of the monk; then equipped with his begging-bowl and fan—to shade his eyes not from the sun but from the maidens—he follows his new companions back to the monastery, while in the world he has left they keep high festival, ending up with what the Burman loves so well, a *Paw* or dramatic representation.

Except for the "ear-boring," which takes place much at the same time as the boy becomes a novice, there is not much fuss over the girl. She gets no education except what she can pick up from her brothers, but she leads a free happy life, and will be, by and by, quite able to manage her husband and his business. And that being so she does not seem to worry over the admittedly inferior position which is given her by Buddhism, or over the fact that she cannot reach Nirvana without being reborn as a man. There is no exception, not even in the case of nuns,<sup>1</sup> but they have no

<sup>1</sup> Allowed by Gautama as an afterthought, and under pressure, and with the warning that they would bring ruin upon Buddhism in 2500 years.

monasteries, receive no alms, and are accorded no veneration. Perhaps they might have made a position for themselves if they had mended their own "illiteracy," and undertaken the education of the girls. But no suggestion of such a thing ever came from the Buddha; it seems alien to the genius of the East, and so the nun, generally a saddened old lady with a history, tells her beads, and hopes for a somewhat better position in a next life, and has no suspicion that her rather difficult position is any reflection on the wisdom or sympathy of "The Awakened One".

A village monastery is not a very crowded institution—a few *Shins* or novices, a few *Upasins* or "Religious," who have been admitted to the Order by a form of ordination in the monastery *Thain*, and who are also called *Yahans*, and all under the authority of a *Pangyi* or "Great Glory," a *Upasin* who has completed ten years or more in the Order.

Before sunrise, say about 5.30 a.m., the community is called from its slumbers by the booming of the *kaladet*, a great wooden bell, and all range themselves behind the Superior in front of the great image of the Buddha and intone their morning devotions; then, after a slight repast, to work, the elders to meditation, the novices to necessary domestic work and then to continue, with the lay scholars, the lessons of their boyhood. At about 8 a.m. the community sally forth, the Superior at their head, in single file, with begging-bowl in hand to receive the offerings of food with which the laity, not out of charity, but in order to acquire merit for themselves, will fill them. Then

back to the monastery to the one great meal of the day, for no monk is allowed to eat after noon. Again follows meditation for the elders, and the poring over Commentaries of the Pitaka, and for the novices still further grounding in the essentials of Buddhism. In the afternoon visitors may come to the monastery, and, as the cool breeze of evening sets in, the whole community may go for a stroll. But all must be within bounds ere sunset, and about 8 or 9 p.m. the day ends as it began before the great image of the Buddha. Such a life is full of possibilities, of good and also of evil. It may and does uplift the hearts of the people, and is full of the glamour and promise of hopes higher than it actually teaches, but it can also become a life of gossip and idleness, full of those evils which monastic life in the West has at times betrayed. Still it is a life fascinating in its peace and freedom from care, and, if to us Westerners a seemingly idle one, not more idle than the average life of the Burmese laity, a living parable of the Nirvana, which all set before them as the very highest object to be attained.

If the novice perseveres, he may become in time a Yahan and a Pôngyi. He may rule the monastery to which he came as a boy; may even become a Gaing-ôk ruling over a group of monasteries, or a Sadaw, a sort of Vicar-General. He may even become a "Thathana-baing," Superior-General of the whole 100,000 brethren of the yellow robe. And if as a Pôngyi he dies, he receives such a burial as no other country gives; a burial which in its magnificence speaks of the reverence in which the Order is held, and which in its sheer



jollification suggests that the Burman all along has been suppressing his real nature, and in the search for relief can turn even the burial of a saint into a joke.

II. But very few of us are born to be monks, and the novice as a rule soon returns to his home, it may be in a week or a fortnight, and casts aside the yellow robe. He marries young, and lives on in his bride's home, and by and by succeeds to his little patrimony.

Meanwhile what of his religious life as a layman? If he is trying to be a good Buddhist there are four "Duty-days" in the month, at the four quarters of the moon, when he ought to present himself at the pagoda and perform his devotions. And he will do so, especially in the three rainy months which constitute *Wā* or Lent, and more especially when he is getting old. If he is especially devout, he will fast till noon, and observe the additional five commandments<sup>1</sup> which are incumbent only on monks.

Yet there is no blinking the fact that in living this "lay" life our Burmese friend has deliberately rejected the "Deliverance" offered him by the Buddha. He may acquiesce in that first article of the Buddhist Creed that "Life is suffering," but when he strips off the yellow robe he records his determination to live on in the Life of Suffering, and postpone all effort for release.

It might be argued that if the Buddhist turns his back on the counsel of the Buddha, he is no worse than the Christian who rejects the counsel of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

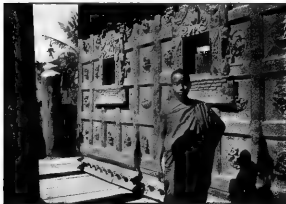
But the cases are not necessarily similar. If the Christian rejects the counsel of Christ it is because he is sinful, whereas the Buddhist who rejects the counsel of the Buddha may only do it because he is human. For here is one great difference between Christianity and Buddhism. Our Lord teaches us that in whatever path of life our lot is cast we may find salvation in Him, and opportunities enough of consecrating ourselves to God.

The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we need to ask,  
Room to deny ourselves, a road  
To bring us daily nearer God.

Our Lord often called men out of ordinary life in order the better to minister to their brethren, but He never suggested that men could not find salvation in ordinary life. Not so the Buddha. He did not teach men to live in the world, and make it better than it is, but to separate from it. Not that he ignored the laity. For them, too, he had his precepts, and by following them the laity could live a good life, and their Karma would ensure a better position in some other existence for those who inherited it. But the highest salvation of all, the only salvation in fact, the Nirvana, was only possible for those who had renounced the ties of home and the cares of life, and donned the yellow robe. Just as Gautama himself had only been able to find peace by leaving his home and loved ones in Kapilavastu, so to seek the end of sorrow must his followers embrace the life of the Mendicant.



BRINGING THE RICE DOWN TO THE RIVER SIDE



A BURMESE BOY WEARING THE YELLOW ROBE



Removing the character of a householder, like a tree, whose leaves are cut off, clothed in a yellow robe, let me wander alone as a rhinoceros.

If you want to realize the impassable gulf between the pessimism of Buddhism and the optimism of the Burmese, between the despair of life which stamps the one, and the determination to enjoy himself which is so marked a characteristic of the other, go to one of the many pagoda feasts about the land, more especially to that "Mecca" of Buddhists of every land, the Shwé Dagon of Rangoon.

The pagoda stands on a hill, gleaming for miles across the levels. Four long covered stairways (one is blocked by the English Arsenal) lead up to a broad level platform 700 by 900 feet, surrounded by shrines and pagodas of every size and description, and in every stage of barbaric splendour. In the midst springs the great pagoda, 370 feet high, covered with gold plates below, gilded to the summit, where it is crowned with a royal *asi* or umbrella, studded with precious stones and jewels. The whole court is full of a seething joyous crowd; which is continually being reinforced, as new parties swarm up the stairs, blowing great conchs or shells to proclaim that they are bringing their offerings to the monks. They will go to one or other of the shrines, and intone their Buddhist devotions, proclaiming that "all is sorrow," and then give themselves up to unmitigated enjoyment, and watch the dancers or the mime. Myriads of candles, burning in honour of "Him who found the light," illuminate the shrines and the pagoda base, dimming even the

glorious moonlight into which above the pagoda is seen to tower.

One could imagine it, at any rate the more innocent part of it, and certain things being omitted which even devout Burmese would like to see omitted, as a Christian festival, speaking of gratitude to One who had brought deliverance from sin, and won for us the hope of eternal life with God, but it is hard for the Western mind to see how it all tallies with a Creed which condemns even innocent enjoyment, and tells us that it must be left behind if we are to find release from sorrow.

III. It is to its aloofness from actual life, whether it be that of the nation or the individual, that we must ascribe the curious fact observable in all Buddhist countries, and not in Burma only, that Buddhism never stands alone. Its votaries always supplement its teachings with some other religious faith or cult. "Not one of the five hundred millions," says Professor Rhys Davids, "who offer flowers now and then on Buddhist shrines, and who are moulded more or less by Buddhist teaching, is only or altogether a Buddhist."

We have in an earlier chapter alluded to the animism of the hill tribes, and the readiness with which they embrace Buddhism. But they will not thereby cease to be animists, and deliverance from fear will be but partial, for not even amongst the Burmese has the Buddhism of a thousand years quenched the superstitions of animism. Here is what that life-long sympathizer with the Burmese, Sir George Scott, has to say

in one of his latest works about the purity and strength of their Buddhism :—

The question of doctrinal schisms [he is speaking of Buddhist sects] is insignificant compared with the indisputable fact that the vast body of the people are animists pure and simple, and that Buddhism as a religion is merely the outward label. A Burman gives alms to the monks, worships at the pagoda on the appointed days, and repeats the doxologies which he has learnt at school, but he governs his life and actions by a consideration of what the spirits of the air, the forest, the streams, the village, or the house, may do if they are not propitiated.

After alluding to the opinion of many that Buddhism is not a religion but a philosophy, he continues :—

What weighs on the average Burman's mind is the danger of displeasing the *nats*. In his everyday life, from the day of his birth to his marriage, to his old age, even to the point of death, all the prominent rites and forms are to be traced, not to the teaching of the Baskets of the Law, but to the traditionary whims and fancies handed down from admittedly Shamanistic forefathers. If misfortunes fall upon him he makes offerings to the evil "*nats*," who, he thinks, have brought it upon him. When he wants to build a house, launch a boat, plough or sow his fields, start on a journey, make a purchase, marry a wife himself, or marry his daughter to another, bury a relation, or even endow a religious foundation, it is the spirits he propitiates, it is the "*nats*" whom he consults. His Pali prayers and invocations, lauds and doxologies avail him nothing then, and are not even thought of. Even the monks themselves are often greatly influenced by the strong basis of animistic religion. It is not uncommon to find spirit shrines almost in the monastic compound, and altars to the viewless spirits of the air are often actually in the shadow of the pagoda. It is the heritage of an immemorial past, it is the core of the popular faith. Buddhism is merely a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, an electroplating, a bloom, a varnish, enamel, lacquer, a veneer, some-

times only a pargeting, which flakes off and shows the structure below.

Therefore, outside the village the Nat shrine is just as much the rule as the pagoda. It may not be so prominent an object. The tourist as he whirls north on the railway, or ascends the river, to Mandalay, sees it not, but its flimsy structure, like a bird cage of bamboo, or a little wooden dovecote perched in a tree, with a doll-like image or picture, is always there; and if it is not, like the pagoda, the centre of the villagers' pride, it is even more than the pagoda the object of his continual care.

Therefore whatever we have said above as to the primeval animism of that haunted world into which the message of the Buddha first came, has to be repeated of the Burmese of to-day. Only, to the various classes of spirits alluded to in a former chapter, the unnamed spirits of nature or of the departed, the Burmese have added an aristocracy, the thirty-seven Nats of Burma. Chief of them is the Thagya Min, King of the Nat country. It is his descent to earth, in our April, when the water feast takes place, symbolic of the coming rains, which marks the beginning of the Burmese new year. In origin he is Indian, the "Sakka" (or 'Indra) of the Indian Buddhist legends. He comes as near as anything in Buddhism to the Divine. But the other thirty-six Nats are departed heroes, with essentially earthly connexions; their deeds and histories are all duly related in a book and their images are preserved in the enclosure of one of the pagodas at Pagan.



The best known is Min Magari. On earth he was a blacksmith, who was burnt to death, on a charge of rebellion, by a king of Tagaung in pre-historic times. A sister, one of the royal queens, flung herself into the flames and perished with her brother. They became Nats, and after various adventures took up their abode on Mt. Popa, the dead volcanic cone which looks down over the plains of Central Burma, and must have always appealed to the Burmese sense of the mysterious. Min Magari has become the household Nat of Burma. For his comfort the house-posts are covered with hoods of cloth, for therein he takes up his abode, and a cocoanut is hung up with a red rag over it for his food. In times of sickness it is taken down and examined, and sometimes a new one is put up in its place. Anawrata is said to have tried to stamp out the veneration paid to Min Magari, and to his time is ascribed the proverb which so remarkably crystallizes the Burmese efforts to combine Buddhism and Animism: "Put a pagoda in front of the house, but an image of Min Magari at the back".

In an article in the first number of "Buddhism," the Rangoon magazine alluded to above (p. 50), there is a rather curious allusion to Burmese animism. The writer, Maung Po Mé, is trying to show that the Burman is altogether a Buddhist, but, in endeavouring to smile away the animism of his people, he only provides us with a clearer illustration of its power.

"If," he says, "in times of sorrow, of calamities, we see the Burmese Buddhist act otherwise [i.e. than in accordance

with Buddhist law and custom] we must know that he has been faced by a riddle of the universe, and he cannot find a solution; in his performance of an old-time rite he may seek consolation, but that does not mean that he has found a solution of the riddle. He has merely done that which is human, and which he thinks right.

Maung Po Mé's last sentence is suggestive. In ignoring the fundamental instincts of mankind, the Buddha has made it certain that his followers will deny their faith whenever their deepest thoughts are stirred. It is not that they are bad, but simply that they are human.

During the years, those far-away years, "before the war," there was a Buddhist revival proceeding in Burma. In so far as it was engineered by Europeans turned Buddhist it was an effort to clear away the animistic ideas which underlie the Buddhism of the people, and to preach the latter as a sort of materialistic atheism. If they continue their efforts, "after the war," and if, unconsciously, by the solvent influences of Western non-religious education, they are assisted in their work, what will become of the Buddhism of the people? Will the bricks of the "Buddhist" pagoda fall asunder when the "animistic" cement which at present holds the building together is perished?

Pure Buddhism has the thoroughness of a system of abstract thought, but also its weakness. The Buddha, wrapt in meditation beneath the Bo-Tree, weaves his scheme of life, and from it excludes all thought of God, or soul, or purpose in the world.

Aloofness from life, distrust of life, and its concerns, characterize all his attitude to it. But we believe that that other Teacher, who toiled in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, on whose ear fell daily the hum of life, who was seen at wedding feasts and wept at the graveside of a friend, and over the doom of a city, knows more of the hearts of men, and has for them a truer message.

## CHAPTER VII.

### TOWARDS THE LIGHT.

THE burden of the previous chapters has been that Buddhism has failed. It has not ennobled Burmese history, or brought it into the great world movements towards higher things; it has not wrought satisfaction in Burmese life. The glamour of its ritual, its curious mingling, for all its pessimism, with the gaiety of Burmese life, will, no doubt, for long blind the casual student to its defects, but they are very real.

Can we say that Christianity has succeeded where Buddhism has failed?

I. The beginnings of Christianity in Burma were hardly auspicious. It began with a burst of intolerance, and Buddhism, although in history occasionally breaking out in persecution, is theoretically a religion of toleration. And then when the intolerance was crushed, Christianity appeared not as a gift of God, or as the bow in the hand of the Rider on the White Horse, "going forth conquering and to conquer," but as the religion of a band of miserable captives, allowed to exist on sufferance, and to settle down in the midst of a people who despised them.

Syriam, a few miles to the south-east of Rangoon,  
(96)

and on the further side of the Rangoon River, may be regarded as the cradle of Christianity in Burma. A ruined church, a few nameless tombs, and the foundations of buildings are all that are left to recall one of the romances of Burmese history.

Here it was that in 1603 Philip de Brito, a Portuguese adventurer in the service of the King of Arakan, revolted, and rallying the Talaings to him, set up a kingdom. He might have had a useful career, and have shown to the Burmese what a Christian civilization could be, but he began by destroying pagodas, and forcing his Talaing subjects to embrace Christianity. Retribution soon followed. In 1613 Syriam was besieged by the King of Ava; a Talaing opened the gates, and de Brito was impaled in front of his own palace. A heterogeneous throng of Christians were carried into captivity. Some were settled at Ava, and their descendants served as artillerymen in the Burmese armies in the wars of the British annexation, while others were settled between the Rivers Mu and Chindwin.

In 1719 an embassy went from Pope Clement XI to China, headed by Monsignor Mezzabarba, Patriarch of Alexandria. The embassy was not very successful, but two priests were left in Burma, Joseph Vittoni, a secular priest, and Father Calchi, a member of the Barnabite congregation. They found two Portuguese priests ministering to the descendants of de Brito's soldiery at Syriam, but not doing missionary work, and they also found that the descendants of the very mixed captive population in Upper Burma retained a

form of Christianity. After much opposition they obtained an audience with Maha Dhamma Yaza, the Burmese King of Ava and Pegu, and were allowed to build churches and preach the Christian religion. Calchi built the church at Ava, and died worn out in 1728.

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century Roman Catholic priests were coming and going, but it was one of the most stormy periods of Burmese history; the Môn were making their last ineffectual struggle against the Burmese, and from Syriam in the South to Ava in the North the land was being ravaged alternately by either people. The foreign traders, Dutch, Portuguese, French, and English, intrigued first with one side and then the other, and perhaps the Roman Catholic priests could not help being involved in political questions. Certainly they shared in the miseries of the time, and in the vengeance meted out to the Môn. Amongst those who suffered were Father Gallizia, first Roman Catholic Bishop in Burma, murdered in 1745, Father Nerini, also a bishop, compiler of a grammar and dictionary in Burmese and Môn, and builder of the great church at Syriam, and Father Angelo, skilled in medicine. The two latter, with many others, were killed when Martaban and Syriam were sacked by Alaungpaya. With the establishment of the last Burmese Empire quieter times came to the Roman Mission, but the first Burmese war with Great Britain brought another crisis in 1824, when the two churches in Rangoon were destroyed, and all Europeans imprisoned.

Since 1719 the work had been carried on by Italians. Among them was San Germano, who spent twenty-eight years in Burma and completed the Church of St. John in Rangoon. Returning to Italy in 1808 he set down his impressions of the country in a book, still authoritative, which was published after his death by Cardinal Wiseman, under the title of "A Description of the Burmese Empire".

In 1856 the mission work of the Roman Church was handed over to the French Société de Missions Etrangères, and Paul Ambrose Bigandet was consecrated Bishop and sent with three priests to Burma. He found the Roman Missions at a low ebb, but he had already worked for fourteen years in Mergui and Penang, and before his death in 1894 had completely re-organized the work of the Church, and had himself become one of the greatest authorities not only on Burma but on Buddhism.

Roman Catholic Christianity to-day, with its three bishops, and over 200 clergy, and its magnificent schools which, staffed by the lay Christian Brothers, are threatening to withdraw from the Church of England its supremacy among the Eurasians, may well be regarded as the work of Bigandet. The cathedral in Rangoon, the finest of all Christian buildings in the East, has been built since his death, but its great twin spires rise high over Rangoon, and speak to those who come up the Rangoon River of the persistent efforts of Bigandet and his heroic predecessors to gain a foothold for Christ in Burma.

II. Side by side with the Roman Mission, during

the past century, has grown up the American Baptist Mission. Its founder was Adoniram Judson.

Judson was an American Congregationalist, and as such arrived at Serampore, near Calcutta, where the famous English Baptist Carey, the "consecrated cobbler," was working. Very shortly, however, after his arrival his conversion to Baptist opinions was completed, and he was baptized, along with his wife, by immersion at Serampore. Ordered out of its territory by the East India Company, which had decided that missionary work was politically dangerous, Judson, after many adventures, found himself in Rangoon in July, 1813. Felix Carey, son of Carey of Serampore, was already working there, and with him Judson began his ministry to the Burmese. Meanwhile the Baptists in America, hearing of Judson's conversion, determined to support him, and the American Baptist Missionary Union was formed. Felix Carey retired shortly afterwards, and so the work begun by English Baptists was carried on by the American Union. In 1820 Judson's converts numbered ten.

Judson's life is one long romance, but its chief interest centres in his three journeys to Ava. He went first in 1821 to see the King Bagyidaw, and to induce him to grant liberty of conscience to his subjects, for though foreigners were allowed to follow their religious "custom" whatever it might be, no Burman was allowed to change his religion. The visit ended in failure, and Judson had to leave Ava.

He went again in 1822. Price, a medical missionary, had joined him in Rangoon, and his skill in



operating for cataract had attracted notice. Price was summoned to Ava, and Judson accompanied him. The missionary outlook seemed so hopeful that Judson returned to Rangoon to fetch his wife. But the first Burmese war broke out early in 1824, and Judson and Price, with all other Europeans, were thrown into prison. They suffered great hardships, from which they were only delivered by the advance of the British on Ava, towards the end of 1825. Judson acted as interpreter in arranging the conditions of the Treaty of Yandabu. On the conclusion of the war he settled at Amherst, the capital of the new British territory in Tenasserim, and there his wife died, and also his only child, born to him during the terrible experiences in Ava. With the ulterior object of securing the insertion of a clause permitting religious toleration, he consented to return to Ava again in 1826, with the British Commissioner, Crawford, who had to complete the Treaty of Yandabu, but he again failed of his object.

After the death of his wife, Judson lived for nearly twenty years the life of a hermit, handing over to the American Baptist Mission all his private funds, and giving himself up to prayer and fasting, and to the work of translating the Old Testament into Burmese. The New Testament had already been completed before he went to Ava, and the Burmese MSS. had been providentially preserved during his imprisonment there.

He saw the beginning of work amongst the Karens but took no active part in it. He married the widow

of Mr. Boardman, the first American Missionary to the Karens, just before his only home visit to America, thirty-three years after his arrival in the East; he married a third time in America, and died of fever, not long after his return to Burma, during a voyage for his health in April, 1850, and was buried at sea. "A man of fearless courage, and indefatigable energy, of great mental powers and utter devotion, he stands out pre-eminently as one of the great missionaries of all lands and times."

But even if he had not been a great missionary, Dr. Judson would have won fame as the translator of the Bible into Burmese. This he had done, the Apocrypha excepted, by 1834. Mr. Felix Carey had translated St. Matthew's Gospel into Burmese before Judson's arrival, but Carey knew little of Burmese, and his interpreters not much more of English, and the version was valueless. But Judson's

version is perfectly intelligible, and on the whole idiomatic; it flows smoothly and is easy to be understood (especially, however, by Europeans for whom it is not intended). It has gone a long way towards fixing Christian terminology in the Burmese language; and when it is remembered that in Buddhism the ideas of God, the soul, sin (in the Christian sense), sacrifice, atonement, heaven, angel, etc., are completely wanting, and have no natural equivalent in Burmese, the difficulties that beset the first translator in this matter can easily be perceived. Dr. Judson's translation of the Scriptures has received from the missionaries of the American Baptist Union, with the assistance of their converts, continuous revision from the time of its first publication; and though the changes introduced have generally been only on points of minute

detail, no two editions ever printed are said to be quite identical. At the present time the work is undergoing at their hands a more complete and careful revising than heretofore.

Dr. Judson's version of the New Testament unfortunately has a sectarian bias in that the words "baptize" and "baptism," which have been transliterated from the Greek into English and into almost every Christian tongue, have by him been always rendered "immerse" and "immersion". The American Baptist Mission Union, strong in the fact that Dr. Judson was one of themselves, and that they greatly predominate in numbers in the Burmese Mission field, have ever been unwilling to adopt the neutral word "baptize" (which says nothing as to the manner in which the rite must be performed) and have insisted on the insertion of the word "immerse," which again they interpret as meaning "submerge". In the words of the Gospel too, where we read that when the Lord was baptized, "He went up out of the water," this is paraphrased, "when He appeared rising up out of the water"—which is a gloss pure and simple; whether it be accurate or inaccurate as a matter of history no Baptist scholar could for a moment affirm that this is what the evangelist has written. Hence it is that the British and Foreign Bible Society has always been unable to take any part in the publication of Dr. Judson's versions of the Gospels, though it has ever liberally assisted in the production and circulation of a number of special books both of the Old Testament and of the New.<sup>1</sup>

III. The story of the early efforts to preach the gospel of Christ to the Burmese has prepared us for what is a common experience of those who do missionary work in Burma, the difficulty of converting the Burmese to Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> G. Whitehead in the "Rangoon Diocesan Quarterly," August, 1906.

Of this statistics are eloquent. In 1852, soon after Judson's death, there were sixty-two missionaries and female assistants, and 7750 Karen Christians belonging to the American Baptist Mission, but only 267 Burmese. In 1910, almost a century after Judson's arrival, among the 70,000 baptized converts of the same mission, only 3182 were Burmese. The Roman Catholics have actually abandoned direct evangelistic work among the Burmese, and the great bulk of their adherents are to be found among Tamils, Karens, and Eurasians.

Of course, the reasons are manifold. One is persecution. Under native rule a change of religion was actually forbidden to the Burmese. The following story appears in Wayland's "Life of Judson":—

About fifteen years ago the Roman Catholic priests converted to their faith a Burman teacher of talent and distinction. . . . After his return from Rome, whither they had sent him to complete his Christian education, he was accused by his nephew, a clerk in the high court of the Empire, of having renounced the established religion. The Emperor, who, it must be remembered, was far from approving the religion of Buddha, ordered that he should be compelled to recant.

The nephew seized his uncle, cast him into prison and fetters, caused him to be beaten and tortured continually, and at length had recourse to the torture of the iron maul. With this instrument he was gradually beaten, from the ends of his feet up to his breast, until his body was little else but one livid wound. Mr. R. was one of those that stood by and gave money to the executioners to induce them to strike gently. At every blow the sufferer pronounced the name of Christ and declared afterwards that he felt little or no pain.

When he was at the point of death under the hands of

his tormentors, some persons, who pitied his case, went to the Emperor with a statement that he was a madman, and knew not what he was about; on which the Emperor gave orders for his release. The Portuguese took him away, concealed him until he was able to move, then sent him privately in a boat to Rangoon and thence by ship to Bengal, where he finished his days. Since then the Roman priests, of whom there are four only in the country, have done nothing in the way of proselytizing but confined their labours to their own flocks, which are composed of the descendants of foreigners.

Alongside this treatment of a Christian must be placed the persecution meted out to the "Paramats" ("excellent" ones), certain Buddhist heretics who, instead of reverencing the "Buddha," the "Law," and the "Monkhood," reject the last named altogether, and for the historical Buddha substitute a pantheistic conception of their own, which they call Shwé Nyan Daw, the Holy Mind. Mindôn Min has been described as the best and most enlightened king Burma ever had, a veritable epitome of all Buddhist virtues, but he cruelly put to death his physician, Maung Po, because he was a leader of these unorthodox Paramata. Many of them have found a refuge in the Christian Church.

But persecution has never for long deterred the progress of the Church of Christ, and for the backwardness of the Burmese to accept the Gospel we must find another reason, and that is the religious apathy generated by Buddhism. Buddhism fails in two directions. It has never anywhere been able to drive out animism, and on the other hand it fails to act as a stepping-stone to Christianity.

In proclaiming the Gospel of Christ the missionary generally finds that certain assumptions or postulates which lie at the back of Christianity, lie also, however inarticulate, at the back of men's minds, and make as it were a sort of common language, which makes it possible for the missionary to give and for his hearers to understand his message. These assumptions are a belief in God, and a belief in the soul, and the sense of sin as something which has come in between God and the soul. But when we turn to Buddhism we find that it knows nothing of this common language. In fact, in taking over animism, it is, we think, true to say that it makes it harder than ever for the animist to learn the truth, for while Buddhism allows the animistic Buddhist to retain his fear of evil spirits he makes that dim perception of a far-away God, which we have noticed everywhere in animism, to wax dimmer.

Not only has Buddhism not prepared the hearts of men to welcome the truth about God, it has, as Bishop Copleston says (Pan-Anglican Paper—"Buddhists and Christian Morality"), created a false common sense, and a false conscience. Transmigration seems to explain all the inequalities of life, and robs it of all true incentive to effort, and the resolve to conquer sin, and the idea that to take life is the greatest of all sins leads him to think that Buddhism is altogether superior to Christianity. It would almost seem as if, first of all, all the mass of legendary thought and superstitious custom which lie at the back of Burmese Buddhism must be broken by the

solvent influences of Western thought, and the Burman himself pass through a period of irreligion before he realizes his need of Christianity, but it is not a future which any lover of Burma or the Burmese can contemplate with pleasure.

IV. Meanwhile the chief energies of Roman Catholics and American Baptists have been devoted to other peoples, the Roman Catholics to the Tamils, and both to the Karens. As to the extension of these latter people over Burma we must refer our readers to the first chapter of this book. The cession of Arakan and Tenasserim, as a result of the first Burmese war, in 1826, brought some of these people within the British sphere of influence, and work amongst them was begun. Mr. Boardman, an American Baptist Missionary, working in Tavoy, baptized Ko Tha Byu, the first convert, in 1828. Ko Tha Byu, who had been a slave, became the apostle of the Karens. Work was also begun among the Karens in Burmese territory at Bassein in 1849, but the missionaries were forced, under threat of death, to leave, and had to transfer the headquarters of the Mission to Sandoway in British Arakan. They returned to Bassein after the second Burmese war in 1853. In the same year Drs. Mason and Cross founded the American Baptist Mission at Toungoo well within the then limits of British Burma, and began the work of evangelization in the hills to the East and West. By 1910 in the American Missions in Burma there were 55,000 baptized Karens.

No race in the world, and certainly none in Burma,

have witnessed to the power of the Gospel as have the Karens. Formerly, outnumbered and oppressed, they were driven into the hills and jungle by the Burmese, who made them figures of fun in all their theatrical representations. They sank steadily lower, became more dirty and degraded, drunken and immoral. Now for fifty years they have been accepting Christianity. It might be said of them, as compared with the Burmese, "not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," but Christianity has raised them to an extent few could have foretold. The Pax Britannica is tempting them to leave their hills and jungle fastnesses, and has given a latent industry, which perhaps they derive from their Chinese affinities, fuller scope. But Christianity has made them sober, moral, and clean. Their language has been reduced by the missionaries to writing, and the Christian Karen, male and female, is becoming as literate as the Burmese Buddhist male, and it is a common experience to enter a Government School in one of the Delta towns, and find a class of Burmese boys being taught by that formerly most contemptible of all objects, a Christian Karen woman.

The national and religious revival among the Karens is not, however, without its dangers.

So strong is the religious instinct of these people, and so fully are they conscious that it is religion which has united them and made of them one nation, that they have identified their religious and national aspirations, and look forward to a sort of theocracy, when there shall arise a king or chief who will also be the head of their religion.



It is this idea which Karen leaders—like Ko Pai San and our own excommunicated priest Thomas Pellako—have exploited to the great detriment of the people. In several towns of lower Burma the followers of Ko Pai San have built huge fantastic edifices which are to be at the same time palace and temple to the future Karen king when he comes. So great has been the sum of money spent on these futile buildings that thousands of the poor Karens have mortgaged their fields and impoverished themselves in providing the means for their erection. The Karens, therefore, need very careful and very wise leadership on the part of the Christian missionaries if their first advance is to be maintained.<sup>1</sup>

Also rapid as the Christian harvesting has been, only 100,000 out of 700,000 who are returned in the census of Burma as Karens have been converted. Another generation or two will see these people *en masse* abandoning their animism; that at any rate must be the result of contact with civilization, whether Christian or Buddhist.

If they accept Christianity, well; if not, they will become Buddhists, and will make of Burma a solid Buddhist wedge in the way of Christianity. We may well be thankful then that where the English Church has as yet been able to do so little, so much should have been done towards bringing the Karens to Christ by the Romans and American Baptists. With St. Paul we can rejoice that one way or another "Christ is preached".

The missionary work of other bodies in Burma can only briefly be alluded to. The Methodist Episcopal

<sup>1</sup> "Christian Missions in Burma," W. C. B. Purser. (Pub. S.P.G.)

Church of America began work in 1878. Until comparatively recently it worked chiefly among Europeans. English Wesleyan Methodists started work in Upper Burma after the last Burmese war. To them belongs the honour of opening the first leper home in Burma. The Roman Catholics support three others.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE WHITE MAN'S WITNESS.

WE have often been told of those modern "Wise Men" from the East, who in the days when Japan was emerging from the chrysalis stage, and adopting Western civilization, were sent to Europe to study the results of Christianity in professedly Christian lands. Their verdict, we are told, was hardly favourable. What would it have been, had they come to Burma to see the witness to their Faith in those who come to govern and trade and fight?

I. We have already (in chapter v.) learnt something of the first European traders, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English, who schemed now with, now against, one another in the race for wealth, and were found first on one side, then on another, in the Burmese-Môn contest for supremacy. As at Waterloo it was the English who stood the pounding longest, and though suffering like the others from the occasional massacres, with which the Burmese tempered their justice, were on the whole the most favoured customers. Behind them, too, was the growing power of the East India Company in India.

Rangoon, founded by Alaungpaya in 1755, under the shadow of the old pagoda, was destined, from its

central position in the great alluvial plain, linked up by creeks and waterways on the one side with the Irrawaddy, on the other with the Sittang, to become the great outlet of the as yet unrealized wealth of Burma.

We get a glimpse of it, at the beginning of the last century, "a sort of Alsatia, resorted to by desperate and reckless adventurers of almost every nationality. European countries were represented by a few English, French, and Portuguese residents, along with whom Armenians, Parsis, and Moguls shared the trade; but all were looked down upon, harassed, and greatly restricted in their operations by the Burmese". They imported sugar and muslin from Bengal, linen from Madras and miscellaneous iron, brass, glass, and woollen goods from Europe, while the chief export was teak wood. This latter was growing in esteem, on account of its essential oil, which preserves instead of corroding iron and steel embedded in it, and was exported in large quantities for shipbuilding. But prior to the annexation of the coast-lands in 1826, only some twenty-five ships cleared annually from Rangoon, and its population certainly did not exceed 20,000. But after the first Burmese war it began to expand, expansion was hastened when Rangoon itself became British in 1853, and to-day it stands out, with its 300,000 inhabitants, and its miles of wharves, the third port of our Indian Empire, and of the 10,000 ships which enter and clear annually over 90 per cent sail under the British flag, and 1200 hail from lands beyond India itself.

Burma has therefore come into the great stream of the world's commercial life. For better or for worse it has become an "Eldorado" whither men come, not seeking gold dust indeed, but the rice and oil and teak, which are so much more valuable than gold, and which are the natural wealth of the country.

Thus all over Burma are scattered groups of Europeans, exploiting this wealth. The majority, of course, are to be found in Rangoon. The rice merchants and brokers will be found there, and in the coast and estuary towns of Akyab, Bassein, Tavoy, and Moulmein. American engineers work the oil wells, and at many an inland centre, in the forest districts, will be found groups of young men, often from our Universities, who are employed by the Timber Companies in the oversight of the extraction of teak.

Trade, however, is not the only object which takes Europeans to Burma. We came in the first place, no doubt, to trade; we remained to govern. Sir John Seeley says in the "Expansion of England" that the study of English history must always end with something like a "moral". We did not set out, as a people, on a career of Empire. Empire came to us. We conquered half the world in a fit of absence of mind. The old East India Company set out to trade; the necessity of preserving order turned a company of traders into rulers. The trading was our own idea; the "ruling," we dare say it, was God's. He has overruled our destiny, and given into our hands a bigger task than we ever dreamed of. So little by

little vast districts have come under our charge, and alongside of the men, who come to trade, are the soldiers who keep the peace, and the civil officers who do justice, collect the revenue, and see that the resources of a land naturally rich are not squandered.

Burma is a Province of our Indian Empire, and is administered by a Lieutenant-Governor, with a Legislative Council of nine. The Province is mapped out into eight *Divisions*, some half the size of England, nearly all larger than Wales, under Commissioners. The eight Divisions are divided into thirty-seven *Districts*, as big on the average as the biggest English counties, under the charge of Deputy Commissioners. Each District has its "capital," where the English officials and their subordinates reside, and the work of administration is carried on down from the Districts with their Subdivisions and Townships to the Villages with their Headmen. And beside the Divisions and Districts of Burma proper, there are the Shan States, the Chin Hills, Kachins, and Karenni, where the peoples live under their own rulers in a greater or lesser independence, but subject to the control of British superintendents, and political officers.

To the stay-at-home Englishman the English official may often appear in the light of a tyrant, a "prancing pro-consul". To those who have seen him at work he is almost invariably an overworked man, conscientiously anxious to do his duty to the people committed to his charge.

II. Now, if the question be asked, When did the Church of England see the necessity of beginning work

in this country, and of providing spiritual ministrations for its traders and rulers? we have very humbly to answer, "It never did," or certainly not until quite recently. The old East India Company recognized a duty towards the troops and civilians in its service, and provided chaplains and religious ministrations. Hence as its sphere of activity extended, its chaplaincies extended too, and when, after the Mutiny, its responsibilities were taken over by the Imperial Government, this spiritual responsibility was taken over as well. But it did not include the duty of evangelizing the natives. Roman Catholics and American Baptists had begun mission work in Burma before the English invasion, the former in 1720, the latter in 1813, but Church of England Missions did not begin till 1855, and then only because Government Chaplains, the Chaplains of "John Company," had been calling the attention of the S.P.G. to the need of a work, which the conditions of their own service prevented them from systematically undertaking. Hence it is that in early days our clergy were mainly occupied with the need of affording spiritual ministrations to the soldiers who have won and held Burma for us, and the civilians who have made it what it is, one of the richest and most orderly Provinces of the Empire.

Therefore, in these last chapters it will be well to describe Church work in its natural order, and to begin with the work amongst the English, with what, in Government language, would be called the Ecclesiastical Establishment, though "Establishment" in

India is a very different thing from what we call "Establishment" at home.

Britain sends some of the best of her sons to rule her Indian Empire. They give the best years of their life to it, and it is of the highest importance that they should remain at their best, not only intellectually but bodily and spiritually too—*mens sana in corpore sano*. Therefore the State provides two great services to care for the bodies and souls of its servants—the "Indian Medical Service" to care for the health, and the Government chaplains to minister to the spiritual life of its civil servants and of the troops. In India there are no "Army chaplains"; the troops are served by the Government chaplains.

It is a noble ideal this, that the State should care for the spiritual welfare of its servants. No doubt the reality often falls short of the ideal, but to anyone who considers the isolation and the peculiar temptations of Eastern life, it ought to be clear that the men who are wanted to do spiritual work among our English rulers and soldiers need to be some of the keenest and best, able to maintain a high standard of spiritual life, and to withstand the temptations to apathy or worldliness.

Under the Government establishment, Burma is mapped out into eight chaplaincies. In two of them—Rangoon Cathedral and Rangoon Cantonment—there is much of the settled life of an English parish, for Rangoon is not only a garrison town and the capital of Burma, but the third port of India as well, through which the trade of Burma pours out to the



world, and amongst its 300,000 people are hundreds of English and Scotch merchants and their families. Maymyo, where the Government retires in the hot weather, Bhamo, Shwebo, Meiktila, Thayetmyo and Port Blair (in the Andamans) are all occupied by troops, and are also Government centres, capitals of the divisions and districts into which Burma, for administrative purposes, is divided. An up-country chaplaincy, like Meiktila, will include out-stations, such as Myingyan and Thazi, some hours' journey along a railway, or Taunggyi, a fortnight's ride away in the Shan States. In all of them "the parishioners" comprise Government officials and officers and men in British regiments.

But the Government chaplaincies hardly cover the ground. Throughout Burma there are scattered groups of Europeans and Anglo-Indians<sup>1</sup> (i.e. the descendants of mixed marriages of Europeans with Asiatics). They are engaged in the work of the Government, but also in the extraction and export of rice and oil and teak, in working the railways and steamship lines, or in the rice mills. To minister to these there is in Burma, as in most Indian dioceses, an Additional Clergy Society, which raises money by voluntary subscriptions, and, assisted in some cases by Government grants, procures clergy from England for periods of five or more years. The writer of these pages for three out of his five years in Burma, was a

<sup>1</sup> The term Anglo-Indian, by which English and Scotch residents in India used to be known, is now applied by official consent to the people who were formerly described as Eurasians.

chaplain of the Burma A.C.S., and a brief account of his own particular sphere of labour will illustrate the chief features of all.

His parish consisted of 350 miles of railway, with a roving commission to baptize, marry, and bury along its route. At varying intervals were six larger outposts, or, to speak more accurately, groups of from 50 to 250 Europeans and Anglo-Indians in large Burmese towns from 5000 to 12,000 inhabitants, in four of which were little wooden churches, with each of them the right to a Sunday a month, while, in two other stations, services had to be held once a month on a weekday in the Dak Bungalow or Circuit House, the Government Bungalow where Europeans travelling on duty have a right to sojourn. The chaplain's headquarters were at Insein, the "Swindon" of the Burma railways, while four of the other stations, Tharrawaddy, Yamethin, Pegu, and Pyinmana, were "capitals" of districts, and the congregations a little crowd of Government and railway officials, I.C.S. men, engineers, police, and forest officers, Anglo-Indian subordinates, with little groups of Tamil and Burmese Christians. The efficiency of the work perforce had to vary. Sometimes the chaplain could find a layman willing to read service in his absence, or a Tamil or Burmese catechist to help with their fellow-countrymen. In two places there were sufficient Anglo-Indian children to form a Sunday school, but the whole Christian population in the charge of the chaplain was not more than 600 in all. Still, each little "group" had its Church committee, and they

raised between them about £400 for church purposes. Some of the Anglo-Indians were very poor, and the Indian Civil servant is not so rich as he is often represented.

It is a somewhat disorganized life that such a chaplain has to lead—it is difficult to travel 1000 miles a month and get into a groove—but the work has an importance of its own. Small as the congregations are, their individual influence is great. For whether he acknowledges it or no, the white man represents Christianity to the native, and as a rule he represents it well, certainly in its stronger virtues of justice and truth, honesty and integrity. Still it is very easy, in the isolation of Eastern life, to get away from the Faith which has made our race what it is, and the duty of keeping the White Race Christian is one of the chief problems which faces the Church to-day. In tackling that problem the "short service" man may play his part. He can do little as a missionary, for the time to return home comes just when he has mastered a language and is beginning to be of use, but for work among Europeans he can bring some experience gathered at home, and when he returns home he generally finds that he has learnt a few lessons himself.

III. We come back to the question with which this chapter started. What is the witness for Christ of those who come to trade and govern and fight? Is the impression which it conveys, not only to the Asiatic, but also to the European, overpowering in its sense of the mastery of Christ over our life in Burma?

If anyone hopes for such an impression he will be disappointed. Perhaps the first impression one gets of life in Burma, and of Christian witness, is something like the first view which used to greet the traveller as he steamed up the Rangoon River in the dawning. The great Pagoda dominates everything, speaking of the influence of Buddhism, but the only signs of European influence were the roadstead with its wharves and ships, the monotonous chant of the coolies as they toiled for their pittance lading and unlading, and in the background the tall chimneys and mills and smoke, and crowded streets where squalor and magnificence were curiously blended.

And you asked, "Is this all we have to offer?" It is good, no doubt, to proclaim to the Burman that there is purpose in life, that man was created to subdue the earth, to wrest its secrets and use its forces. But the restlessness of our Western ways and methods is hardly of a sort to commend them to him. Of the purpose underlying life we are so sure, but of this also we can be sure that without the peace of God shed over our efforts we are hardly likely to win this easy-going people of the East, hardly likely to win those who seek Nirvana.

We who pursue  
And see all sights from pole to pole,  
And glance and nod and bustle by  
And never once possess our souls  
Before we die.

There is little doubt that the first impression which has come to many thoughtful Europeans, on landing in Burma, has been a sense of the ineffectiveness and

hopelessness of a mercantile, fighting, governing race, ever trying to commend the faith which it professes, but to which it is so inconstant a witness. The now classic expression of such a feeling is Mr. Fielding Hall's "The Soul of a People".

However, first impressions are not always the truest and most abiding, and many get back after a while to a sense of proportion. It is something that now the single spire of our own Cathedral, and the twin spires of the great Roman Church, lift their heads to tell of a battle being waged for Christ. Also by and by you become aware of a law and order, pervading not only the crowded streets of Rangoon, but the whole land of Burma. It is not all a feverish hunt for wealth. And those who are possessed with the fever are not always and not only Europeans and Englishmen. It is the confusion of tongues and nationalities which is responsible for much of the seamy side of life in Burma. But meanwhile often in his office and mill, and nearly always at the seat of government, the man of the governing race is upholding the principles of Christianity, and if not by his words yet by his deeds proclaiming its power to permeate and control all life in a way that Buddhism never did and, because of its limitations, never can.

Unselfishness and justice, and a care for the well-being of the people, such as Burma never experienced of old, have characterized the British administration, and the loyalty of the people, during this great crisis of our history, tells us that as a whole our efforts have been understood.

'Tis joy to know and strength to feel  
 'Tis blood that rules, and not bare steel;  
 That truth and justice hold a sway  
 Which lasts beyond the fighter's day;  
     I count it pride  
 That here, for heathen eyes to see,  
 The lessons of my mother's knee  
     Are still my guide.

The Empire's built within our hearts,  
 We fashion there its shape and parts,  
 And its foundations deep were laid  
 In sacrifices gladly made.  
     Then happy I  
 If in its splendid eastern wing  
 I set a stone for God and King  
     Before I die.<sup>1</sup>

Still, we would plead with all English folk, men and women, who go out to take their part in the work and life of the East, to remember how real a part they can play in bringing the East to Christ, not only by living an honest, sober, diligent, and pure life, but by simply and naturally taking that part in Christian worship which they have been accustomed to take at home.

To the native, whether of India or Burma, Christianity is the White Man's religion. Therefore, whether they recognize it or not, the white folk represent or misrepresent Christianity to the native; for good or for evil they are "missionaries" of Christ, and by what they say and do is Christianity judged. Those who have read "The Story of the Delhi Mission"<sup>2</sup> will remember the story of Ram Chandra. After a

<sup>1</sup> "The Outpost," by Henry Woolley, "Spectator," January, 1903.

<sup>2</sup> P. 3. (Pub. by S.P.G.)

long struggle he was baptized, and became a power for Christ such as the Church in Delhi has not known before or since, not as a result of reading or argument, but simply because he had seen certain English officials, whom he greatly respected for their integrity in public affairs, kneeling at worship in the garrison church at Delhi.

Life is very open in the East. Every servant knows if his master prays. The white men are few in number, but their prestige is great. Individually they may not be men of great power, and at home may be little accounted of, but in India or Burma, just because they are white, their influence for good or evil is tenfold. What might not be done, then, in a generation, if every white man and woman, soldier, official, trader, or wife, simply and unaffectedly, in bungalow, office, cantonment, or church, took their stand openly for Christ!

## CHAPTER IX.

### LETTING DOWN THE NET.

THE nineteenth century was half over before the Church of England entered the Mission Field in Burma. Our first efforts had been for our own people, the soldier, the civil officer, and trader.

We need not be surprised at this. An imperial race cannot allow its agents to lose the Faith which has made it what it is. "Providence," said Lord Curzon, when Viceroy, "has laid a solemn duty on our shoulders, and that duty is to hold this country by justice and righteousness and goodwill and to set an example to its people." It is no shame therefore that our efforts to christianize Burma should lag behind those of Roman Catholics and American Baptists, who are not so preoccupied with imperial responsibilities, and began their work before ever Burma passed under British rule. It is a shame, however, when the work among the conquering race has extended to the conquered, that it should be starved for want of men and money, and that is the charge, if any, which we should bring against our own Church.

It is not easy to divide the story of Church of England Missions in Burma into periods. Such periods are bound to interpenetrate; progress and retrogres-



sion are unequal in different parts of the field ; but such a course is unavoidable when it is required to get a summary of those facts on which we may base our hopes for the future. So for convenience sake we will divide our subject as follows :—

1. Foundations, and the creation of the bishopric of Rangoon.

2. The failure of the supply of human agents.

3. Revival.

We stand, we believe, on the verge of another period, of which we claim to see the signs, and that is the period of advance, if we are faithful, and the Church at home supports the men and women who are toiling abroad.

I. When we remember the absurd scruples of the East India Company with regard to missionary work, we should not be surprised if the chaplains to Europeans had found it advisable to ignore missionary duties altogether. However, real religious piety could not resist the call, and it is to the chaplains that English Mission work owes its beginning. About 1857 the Rev. C. Parish, chaplain of Maulmein, known to orchid lovers as the discoverer of *Dendrobium Parishii*, asked the S.P.G. to send out a trained schoolmaster "to begin work in this nation of literates".

Civilians, who had become interested, had suggested the Chins of Aracan, the hinterland of our first British territory on the Bay of Bengal, as a promising field, and if their wishes had been acceded to, an Anglican Mission among the Chins might have rivalled the American Baptist Mission among the Karens. But

Maulmein still retained something of its importance as the first great English city of British Burma, and at Maulmein accordingly the work began. Mr. Cockey, a layman, had started a school in 1854, and was ordained in 1859, but in 1861 he was removed by the S.P.G. to Cawnpore, where his brother had died in the Mutiny. The Rev. A. Shears and his wife arrived in 1859, but were invalided two years later, but Mrs. Shears made the beginning of a girls' school. Then in 1860 arrived Mr. John Ebenezer Marks, the "trained schoolmaster" of Mr. Parish's ambition, and so began his life-long work in Burma. In 1861, when Bishop Cotton of Calcutta, in whose diocese British Burma lay, visited Mr. Marks' school, he found 100 boys at work, and pronounced it the most promising thing of the sort in India.

But meanwhile the interest shifted to Rangoon, then a town of 80,000 people, which the annexation of lower Burma had elevated into the position of capital of the British possessions. Mr. Marks was transferred there in 1863, and work in Maulmein flagged; in fact it was even temporarily suspended in 1872. The next ten years saw the beginning of most of our educational and missionary establishments in lower Burma. Mr. Marks, who certainly knew how to build strong foundations, seems to have intended to impress the literate Burmese mind with two great schools in East and West Rangoon, called after the two sons of Zebedee. St. John's College gradually took shape, moving from the "Cottage" to "Woodlands," and then to its present noble and picturesque

site in 1869, where in 1870 the first stone was laid by the Chief Commissioner, General Fytche; but "St. James'" never got beyond the stage of a great conception. "St. Mary's," however, was founded for Burmese girls in 1869, and St. Michael's School for boys at Kemmendine in 1878. Of St. John's College, though it no longer stands head and shoulders above Government and American Baptist institutions, it is safe to say that it has always been the pioneer in Burma of education on Western public school lines; and 15,000 boys, Burmese, Indian, and Chinese, throughout the length and breadth of the land, speak with affection of Saya Mark Kyaung and its founder, and when old age and infirmity drove him from the land kept up a "Marks' Memorial Fund" to support him in homely comfort. The same fund, now that he has passed away, is accumulating to build the new school chapel, which is to keep his memory green.

Expansion in those days followed the river—for the railway was non-existent—and mission centres were formed at Henzada, Myanoung and Thayetmyo on the Irrawaddy, but in the period that followed, alas, the supply of men failed, and work was abandoned.

These years also saw the beginning of work in two other directions.

1. At *Mandalay*. In 1867 Major Sladen, British Political Agent at the Court of the King of Burma, who had often had conversations with King Mindon on subjects connected with the Christian Faith, intimated to Mr. Marks that a Christian Mission would be received. An invitation soon followed, and Mr.

Marks, who had already had an exiled Burmese prince, the Thonzé Mintha, under his tuition, went up to Mandalay, accompanied by some of his pupils. How Mr. Marks came to Mandalay, and was received by the King, and how the King at his own cost built the "Church of our Lord Jesus Christ," and the "Royal School," to which Burmese princes came day by day riding on elephants, is an oft-told tale and our readers must seek it elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> It is one of the romances of Mission adventure, and carries us back to that time so near, and yet in spirit so far away, the Burma of pre-annexation days, and gives us a picture of one of the last of the old Asiatic despotisms.

The buildings still stand, restored, and the centre of the ever-quickening life of the Winchester Mission; and the heart and inspiration of it all is the wooden church, built by a Buddhist king, with nave, aisles, apsidal chancel, and western tower, with pillars of solid teak, 7 feet in circumference, and great posts at the four corners of the tower, 70 feet in height.

In carrying out this work Mr. Marks "wanted for nothing". All expenses were borne by the King. Only one other person was allowed to contribute. Queen Victoria, struck by the unwonted act of a heathen king building a Christian Church, presented the font. It was placed on a slab of white marble especially selected by the King. The church was consecrated by Bishop Milman of Calcutta in July, 1873.

<sup>1</sup> "Christian Missions in Burma," pp. 111-17, Parker. (Pub. by the S.P.G.)

So far all had gone happily. But it gradually became evident that the friendship of the King was inspired by ulterior motives, the desire to obtain political advantages from the British Government. When he found that Mr. Marks was not disposed to help him in this direction, but was bent solely on the work of evangelization, his friendship rapidly cooled, and he gave him to understand that it was not safe for him to remain. Mr. Marks held on till 1875 and then left.

2. The same year that Mr. Marks left Mandalay, a large body of Baptist Karens were received into the Church of England. Five years previously they had left the main body of the American Baptist Mission, excommunicated for adopting infant baptism, and the use of the cross in their chapels, and their leader, the wife of Dr. Mason, a well-known and most staunch Baptist Missionary, had offered to hand them and their Mission property over to the Church of England. The Bishop of Calcutta sent the Rev. J. Trew to report, and he recommended that the Karens should be left to settle their differences in their own way, but as years went by and the schism was not healed, and the seceding Baptists began drifting, some to Roman Catholicism, and others back into heathenism, it was decided to begin work at Toungoo. To the Rev. T. W. Windley, between 1875 and 1882, fell the task of consolidating the newly founded Karen Mission.

In 1877 the good work done and the good foundations laid in Burma received their appropriate crown. Burma was separated from the diocese of Calcutta and

formed into the new diocese of Rangoon, and Jonathan Hill Titcomb, Hon. Canon of Winchester, became its first Bishop. A large part of the necessary endowment was subscribed in the diocese of Winchester, and the fact is duly commemorated in the Arms of the diocese, where the palm of the East is combined with the sword and cross keys of the older see.

Bishop Titcomb's episcopate lasted only two years. A fall, while travelling in the Karen Hills, caused an injury to the spine, and he returned to England in 1879. Two events of importance marked it. One was the beginning of a native ministry among the Karens. At the end of 1878 the Bishop consecrated the Church of St. Paul on the opposite side of the Sittang to Toungoo, and on the following Sunday admitted four Karens to the diaconate. The other event was the withdrawal of the Mission from Mandalay.

Mr. Marks left Mandalay in 1875, but the work was allowed to continue. When King Mindōn died in 1878, James Colbeck was in charge, and during the massacres of February, 1879, with which King Thibaw inaugurated his reign, was instrumental in saving the lives of some of the Royal Family, hiding them on the Mission premises, and then conducting them to the British Agency disguised as servants. Britain was too deeply engaged in Zululand and Afghanistan, or war would have followed at once. As it was, communications were broken off, and the Agency Staff and Records were withdrawn, and the Mission followed. The Mission House was occupied by Bud-

dhist monks, and the church became a State lottery office.

II. After an interval of three years Bishop Strachan was consecrated Bishop in 1882. He was a student of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, and had already laboured for twenty-three years in the diocese of Madras. During furlough he had graduated in Medicine at Edinburgh, and gained the gold medal of his year. Later he was asked to go to Cambridge as University Lecturer in Physiology. The Medical School at Cambridge was in its infancy, and certain distinction awaited the pioneers, but the future bishop declined, and went back to that missionary work in the East, so often "despised and rejected of men," and then from Madras to face another twenty years' work in Burma.<sup>1</sup>

If anyone deserved support Bishop Strachan did, but, just because of his long service abroad, he was out of touch with the Church at home, and the supply of living agents failed. It has been said that the Church of England pegs out a diocese, consecrates a bishop, and then leaves him to find his own clergy. It is to this system, or want of system, and not to Bishop Strachan, that we must ascribe the fact that the work in Burma was at a low ebb when his episcopate came to an end in 1902. It was full of brave attempts in every department of Church work; there was much school and church building. It was under his rule that the main structure of the cathedral

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Knight in the "Rangoon Diocesan Magazine," August, 1906.

(Bishop Montgomery calls it a "charming cathedral") was built, and also the Diocesan Boys' School, which has led the van in Anglo-Indian education. His sympathy and that of Mrs. Strachan for the same neglected folk found vent in the "Bishop's Home" for poor Anglo-Indian girls. What could be done was done, and was well done, and has formed the starting-point for later efforts, but the work was always hampered for want of men. Our Lord sent forth His missionaries two and two. Our men have had too often to work one by one. The result has been, for the men, broken health, and for the work a lack of continuity.

One or two examples will suffice. One of the many unselfish soldiers of the Cross who have laid down their lives for Burma was James Colbeck. In the seventies he laid the foundations of Kemmendine, and Bishop Titcomb, who visited him there in his one-roomed native hut, testified to "the simplicity and earnestness of his loving labour for the Lord". In 1878 he was transferred to Mandalay, and, on the withdrawal of the British Agency in 1879, to Maulmein. He was back in Mandalay again, just before the annexation in 1885. In every place where he worked, he left the marks of his piety and capacity, in buildings and converts at Maulmein, in converts at Mandalay. At Mandalay especially, after the annexation, there was a strong movement towards Christianity, especially among the Paramat followers of Maung Po (see p. 105). But Colbeck was left too much alone, and when he died worn out, after fifteen



years' labour without furlough, in 1888, there was no one on the spot with his grip of the movement, and it died away.

Thomas Rickard of Rangoon, Pegu, and Kemmendine, served in Burma from 1881 to 1903. In 1884 he began his work among the Paramat Burmese in Pazundaung, an eastern suburb of Rangoon. His work spread out into the surrounding country to Pegu and Kyauktan on the east and south, and to Kyaiklat on the Irrawaddy Delta. In all he baptized 1200 Burmese. He was a tireless worker, and to his evangelistic labours were added the care of the Kemmendine Theological Training School, the work of Bishop's examining chaplain, and a share in the revision of the Burmese Bible, Prayer Book, and Hymn Book. But his labours wore him out, and he left Burma in a dying condition in 1903. In both of the above cases it has fallen to the lot of the Rev. G. Whitehead to gather up the fragments of a work thus interrupted, and he could testify to the difficulty in a country like Burma, where it is so easy for the few Christians to sink back into the crowd and customs of Buddhism, to keep a hold on scattered converts. The continuity of the work can only be served by keeping a strong body of men and women at the centre of any particular mission. Where such continuity was maintained the work prospered.

1. This was specially the case with the *Tamil* work in Rangoon. We have already alluded to the continual immigration, especially from South India, of men to do work for which the Burman is ill adapted

or disinclined, in the rice mills, on the railway, and on the wharves of Rangoon. This immigration has practically made of Rangoon an Indian city. Work was begun amongst the Tamils, many of whom are Christians before they leave India, in the seventies; the Church of St. Gabriel was built, and a Tamil deacon was ordained. Bishop Strachan could speak Tamil, and his arrival gave a great impetus to the Mission, and in July, 1903, the Rev. T. Ellis could report that the total number of Tamil and Telugu Christians was 1088 with 632 communicants. The good work still goes on with steady persistence to-day, but of none is it more true that the Church of England carries on "first-rate work in second-rate buildings". But even these are fast improving, for the Tamils are very liberal in the support of their Mission and the maintenance of their native clergy. Throughout Burma there are Tamil congregations, overlooked by the missionaries in charge of Burmese and Karen work and in some cases by the English chaplains, but only in Rangoon is there an English Mission priest set apart for the work.

2. There was also the same steady progress in the *Karen* Mission—largely owing to the work of the Rev. A. Salmon, one of Mr. Windley's successors. He was invalided in 1899, and died in hospital at Liverpool a few days after reaching England.

The Karens fall into three main divisions, Pwos, Sgaws (or Pakus) and Bways. The Pwos cling to the Delta, and work amongst them has generally been attempted from Rangoon. The Sgaws inhabit

the highlands, east of the Sittang valley to Toungoo, and west to Pyinmana. The Bways dwell in the highlands to the north between the Sittang and Salween. The work is conducted from Toungoo, but recognition of tribal differences has resulted in twin Missions, St. Peter and St. Paul's, which deals with the Sgaws, and St. Luke's which takes the Bways as its sphere. But the double Mission has had one good result; it has lessened the loneliness so characteristic of work in Burma; it has been possible for one Mission to help the other. Also the work of the Karen Mission has another advantage; it compels the English missionaries to travel on the hills for some months each year, a privilege denied to their comrades in other parts of the field. At Toungoo reside the English missionaries, men, and women, there are our schools and boarding establishments, whither promising Karen children are brought from the hills, a catechists' training institution, and also a printing press, which is yearly becoming more efficient, and more capable of doing the printing of the diocese. Away on the hills east and west, in villages scattered over several hundred square miles, the work is in charge of native Karen priests and deacons, who numbered four when Bishop Strachan took over the diocese, and thirteen when he left it, under whom again are catechists and school teachers. Each village has its church, generally of bamboo, though some are aspiring now to wood. The whole is supervised by the English missionaries at Toungoo, whose greatest happiness is to tour on the hills, but

who are trying to train these Karen Christians in self-government and self-support.

The great event of each year in each branch of the Mission is a Conference. It was the good fortune of the writer to be present at the Annual Church Conference of the Sgaw Karens in February, 1905. It took place at Klesokee, and a very fascinating experience it was. Situated on a great ridge, the village consisted of groups of poor-looking huts, its only wealth a few cattle, a betel-nut palm grove or two, and a few rice patches in the forest below. But, poor as they were, the people at Klesokee were willing to take their turn with the annual Conference, and feed the 900 to 1000 people who were sure to turn up. Sgaw-Karen clergy were there, catechists and school teachers in plenty, the headmen and elders of villages. The Conference was synod, and pilgrimage, and fair combined. Temporary booths lined the ridge; Shan traders had goodies and trinkets for sale; there was the hum of a happy crowd, much merriment, no drunkenness, and very general friendliness. Fresh groups were continually arriving, on pony-back or a-foot, along the steep paths which rise out of the ravines or zigzag up and down the mountain sides.

The more serious business of the Conference was transacted in a "Pandal," a rough bamboo structure thatched with boughs, capable of accommodating 300 folk. There we met for our services, and twice a day it resounded with chants and hymns familiar to English ears. The Karen is nothing if not musical,



THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, MANGON



KAREN VILLAGE, NEAR TOUNGOO

(See p. 27)

(For a much more typical example, see p. 174 of Porter's work)

CORRECTION

CORRECTION



and, with his strange traditions and yearnings for a better faith, it is perhaps natural that his favourites should be Advent hymns like "Hark the glad sound," or "O come, O come, Emmanuel".

But he has music of his own, and on the first night of the Conference there was a sing-song of some five hours' duration, at which village after village sang words and music of their own. There was little method, and no prize. The villagers squatted in groups, and rose where they were and sang by turns. I could have wished I had known the language, for to understand the songs is to understand the people, with their sturdy independent love of their hills, and their deep religious feeling.

All one day we sat in conclave. Simple questions were deliberated, dealing with religious teaching in the villages, the duty of parents to send their children to the catechist, or even to distant Toungoo for higher education, the supply of Bibles and Prayer-books, the discouragement of lingering superstitions. The catechists read reports on Church work in their villages. I have two beside me as I write. One is from a little village in the wilds, where there are only forty baptized Christians, one celebration a year, and where only 14 rupees are collected annually in money or in kind. The other is from a more prosperous village, where there are ninety-four communicants in a Christian population of 182, and the offerings amount to 300 rupees (£20); they also have a native priest living among them. All the reports together show that in a district as big as several Eng-

lish counties there were 126 villages, 7178 persons under Christian instruction, of whom 4411 were baptized and 2000 were communicants. Their offerings in 1904 amounted to 3386 rupees (£226).

III. With the consecration in 1903 of Bishop Knight, formerly Dean of Caius College, Cambridge, and now Warden of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, there came a revival. Backed up by his brother and Commissary, now Bishop of Gibraltar—both were for years in closest touch with life at Cambridge—the supply of men was once more forthcoming. And as Bishop Montgomery has put it, "The diocese was unable to resist the onset of two such knights".

The policy of the new Bishop was not to open new work, but to strengthen and consolidate the old. So to-day, as the result of his labours, there are six centres of work at Rangoon, Kemmendine, Maulmein, Toungoo, Mandalay, and Shwebo, well balanced, well supplied with workers, clerical and lay, men and also women. And when Bishop Knight was compelled by the physical infirmities which, contracted in England, never left him in Burma to resign his charge in 1909, it was possible to find in the Rev. R. S. Fyffe, Head of the newly constituted Winchester Brotherhood at Mandalay, a Bishop who, on the day of his enthronement, was able to address the Burmese present in their own language. Nor have Bishop Knight's efforts for Burma come to an end. He is still able to do for Bishop Fyffe what his brother did for him. The problem of the living agents is still a difficult one, but that it is being solved seems clear from a study



of the lists of workers in 1903 and 1916 respectively. Then there was a little band of some twenty men and women missionaries "holding the fort," two of them on a sick leave from which they never returned; now there are forty.<sup>1</sup>

Burma was the last diocese visited by Bishop Montgomery on his Eastern tour in 1910 to 1911, a year after Bishop Knight's retirement, and in the "Mission Field" of June, 1911, he summed up some of his impressions.

Burma has a splendid staff of clergy and workers. There can be no doubt about the effect of the labours of the late Bishop and his collaborating brother at Cambridge. No one could help thanking God for this. As we passed from point to point we found strong centres, not lopsided, but balanced; good work among men and among women; on the whole good buildings, and much fellowship. Of course every diocese yearns for expansion, longs to double its staff, and points to the work of other bodies as larger and more organized. Yes, but no one can help thanking God for the tone, the work, and the high level of the Anglican Church and its staff in Burma.

Meanwhile what of the future? There has been revival and consolidation. Men and women have come in increasing numbers to work in Burma. And our buildings have been improved; the cathedral tower and spire, at last completed, speak of the determination of the Church of England to persevere and aspire, and there is hardly a Mission where during the last few years there has not been a new school or mission-

<sup>1</sup> The figures, in each case, include "honorary" missionaries, wives of missionaries, and unpaid "associates".

house built. We still lag behind Romans and Baptists, but not so pronouncedly as formerly. But what of the future? Can we see any reason for looking for success in the near future as the result of the labours of many years? Yes, in two directions, among Karens and also, almost strange to say, among Burmese.

1. The last years of Bishop Knight in Burma were clouded by the defection of a Karen priest, Thomas Pellako. His teaching, which affected a large body of Sgaw Karens, is known as Kleeboism,<sup>1</sup> and was a strange conglomeration of misreading of Scripture, national aspirations, and private ambition. Pellako's licence was withdrawn, and a large number of his followers withdrew from communion. But after many vicissitudes, Pellako has lost his influence with his followers, and now resides under the shadow of our Mission at Toungoo. His followers meanwhile are returning to their allegiance, and a very anxious period in the Mission's history seems at an end.

But a movement of another kind has been taking place among the Talaing Karens of the Delta, a large body of whom waited on Bishop Knight at Christmas, 1905. They stated that they represented about 5000 inquirers, and asked for teachers to be sent among them. The Bishop, with Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Hackney, visited various centres, and found that the movement was a genuine one, but our Mission stations were seriously under-manned, and no one could be

<sup>1</sup> For a description of it see Purner's "Christian Missions in Burma," p. 130.

spared for new work. But the Karens have been persistent, and with happier days it has been possible to do something to meet inquiry. Bishop Fyffe arranged a conference with them near Hmawbi, a town thirty miles north of Rangoon, in the autumn of 1910, and from that time the movement has gone steadily forward and many hundreds have been baptized. Many thousands are affected, and they inhabit creeks in the Irrawaddy Delta, between Rangoon and Bassein. The movement, therefore, will have to be coped with from Kemmendine, and it seems of the utmost importance that the Mission staff at that station should be strengthened.

2. The same course seems clearly demanded by another movement which is proceeding in the towns and villages along the railway line between Kemmendine and Prome. This movement is among the Burmese. At a conference held for the Talaing Karens in March, 1911, there was present a Burmese Yathé or hermit, who had been living for some time in our Mission compound at Kemmendine, learning the articles of the Christian Faith. He had gone out into the jungle, like Gautama of old, to seek the truth, and after ten years of solitude and severest asceticism had found it in Christ. He has now been baptized with the name of John, and confirmed, but not ordained, for still, living his old ascetic life, like another John the Baptist, "neither eating nor drinking," he is endeavouring to bring his old disciples, who number hundreds, into the Kingdom of Heaven.

But who is sufficient for these things? This move-

ment, too, will have to be coped with from Kemmendine, and there the staff consists of three, one on furlough. The native Clergy Training Institution has, indeed, been moved to Mandalay, an excellent policy, for the temptations of Rangoon were not good for the young Karens, Burmese, and Chins, who were training there for the ministry, but the work at Kemmendine still includes all the usual activities of church and school and orphanage, together with oversight of work in the Delta and among the Chins, work, some of it, 100 and 200 miles away. And now there are these movements among the Talaing Karens, and the Burmese. If there is any problem calling for instant solution it is that of the strengthening of the staff at Kemmendine.

It would seem then that the Church of England is called to make a great effort and at once among the Burmese. Other Missions have tried in the past, and have had to confess failure, and in whole or in part have ceased their efforts, and withdrawn their workers to other fields. But it may be that in the reasoned liberty of the English Church the Burmese, especially the more eager and intellectual Burmese of the Delta, will find their way to Christ, and regain for nobler uses that supremacy which once was theirs, but which for a season they have forfeited.

So we are filled with hope. Ten years ago it was constantly urged that it was hopeless to try to convert the Burmese. The only course open to us was to concentrate all our energies upon the hill tribes. Convert them, and they in turn would convert the

Burmese. And it may be that that is God's ultimate plan, to ring Burma round, as it were, with a Christian army gathered from among the despised hill peoples, and so compel Burma to surrender to Christ, much as our English forefathers of old humbled themselves to receive the gospel at the hands of the Celt.

But now, where and when least expected, God's own answer has come. Where human efforts seemed to fail, the Holy Spirit points the way of success. It is impossible for us to explain the genesis of the movements now taking place. They seem, as far as we can judge, to be the direct work of God the Holy Ghost. He can convert where we cannot. And yet they may also be the result of work done in years gone by, honestly done by good labourers who have entered into rest, and on earth saw no fruit of their toil. And the result comes to cheer those who, in other parts of the land, are "toiling all the night and taking nothing". They can thank God and take courage, and look in hope to the time when to them also will come the command to "let down the net".

But whether or no the happiness of winning the Burmese for Christ is to belong to us of the Church of England, of one thing we can be certain. Just because of what it is, Christianity can and must succeed. The struggle will be long, and there will be many a set-back—"there must be also heresies . . . that they which are approved may be made manifest". And, just because of what it is, it will always be possible to point to the ill success of Christianity, and to the defects in individual Christians. The adherents of Bud-

dhism have again and again risen to heights of love and enthusiasm which throw into the shade the devotion of their master, but the Christian always lags far behind Christ. And Christianity will always seem a failure, not only because it sets before us so high an ideal but because it claims the whole of life. The eager Buddhist withdraws from life, creates a desert and calls it peace, and in that artificial peace can make of his stunted life something successful after the Buddhist pattern. The Christian, on the other hand, claims all life for Christ.

Thine is the loom, the forge, the mart,  
The wealth of land and sea ;  
The worlds of sciences and of art,  
Reveal'd and ruled by Thee.

Then let us prove our heavenly birth  
In all we do and know ;  
And claim the kingdom of the earth  
For Thee, and not Thy foe.

Can we wonder that the task proves too big for us, and that we grow impatient and depressed, as we gaze upon the poor beginnings of that City of God, which though existing, finished and perfect, in the mind of God, seems, at any rate, to lack the children, whom God has destined for it ?

We will end with a parable. The last capital of Burma, Mandalay, so far as the Burmese are concerned, is but an empty shell. The walls with their twelve gates still surround it, and the moat with its water lilies, reflecting the azure of the sky, and within is the empty palace of the last kings of Burma. But

the Burmese are not there. They live outside the old city, to the south and west.

Is it not a Parable of the Kingdom of God?

The city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth . . . having a wall, great and high . . . having twelve gates . . . on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, on the west three gates.

The City of God stands waiting, and through the gates, to take their part in its varied life, will pour at last the peoples of Burma to enjoy their own.

## APPENDIX.

*The Four Noble Truths*—which may be described as a Buddhist Creed—as they were promulgated in Gautama's first sermon at Benares :—

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to suffering. Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful; painful is separation from the pleasant; and any craving unsatisfied, that, too, is painful. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging (that is, the conditions of individuality) are painful.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the origin of suffering. Verily! it is the craving thirst that causes the renewal of becomings, that is accompanied by sensual delights, and seeks satisfaction, now here, now there—that is to say, the craving for a future life, or the craving for prosperity.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the passing away of pain. Verily! it is the passing away so that no passion remains, the giving up, the getting rid of it, the emancipation from, the harbouring no longer of this craving thirst.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the way that leads to the passing away of pain. Verily! it is this noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, Right Views, Right Aspirations, Conduct and Mode of Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Rapture."

*The Ten Precepts or Commandments of Buddhism* :—

Abstinence from destroying life ;

Abstinence from theft ;



Abstinence from fornication and all uncleanness ;

Abstinence from lying ;

Abstinence from fermented liquor, spirits, and strong drink which are a hindrance to merit ;

Abstinence from eating at forbidden times (i.e. after mid-day) ;

Abstinence from dancing, singing and shows ;

Abstinence from adorning and beautifying the person by the use of garlands, perfumes and unguents ;

Abstinence from using a high or a large couch or seat ;

Abstinence from receiving gold and silver are the ten means (of leading a moral life).

The first five are the universal commandments incumbent on all, monkhood and laity. The last five are incumbent on the monkhood, and on the laity on Holy Days. The more devout laity will keep them all through the Buddhist Lent.

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